VERTIGO

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LUCIFER™

COLD HEAVEN

"Literate, smart, gloriously nasty."
—NEIL GAIMAN

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ANTONIO FABELA

JOHNSON

GOD

Lucifer

Cold Heaven

Lucifer

Cold Heaven

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LUCIFER VOL. I: COLD HEAVEN

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JOHNSON

GOD

Variant cover art for issue #1 by ***Lee Garbett*** *and* ***Antonio Fabela.***

LOS ANGELES. 2015.

WHEN THE DEVIL ARRIVED IN LOS ANGELES, HE DROVE IN A ***LONG WHITE CONVERTIBLE*** WITH THE TOP DOWN, THE SCENT OF ***BRIMSTONE*** ON THE WIND BEHIND HIM.

PEOPLE HAD TO LOOK AWAY WHEN THEY SAW HIM FOR FEAR OF ***FALLING*** IN ***LOVE*** RIGHT THEN AND THERE.

"An apology for the devil: it must be remembered that we have heard only one side of the case. God has written all the books." — Samuel Butler

WHEN HE ARRIVED, THINGS STARTED TO ***HAPPEN.***

IT'S FILLED WITH ***BLEACH,*** MISTER, SO ***DON'T MOVE*** UNLESS YOU WANT TO GO BLIND.

CHILDREN STOLE CANDY.

STARLETS STABBED DIRECTORS.

SHARKS SWAM TOO CLOSE TO THE BEACH.

ARE THOSE ***DOLPHINS?***

A ***NAMELESS HUNGER*** BLEW THROUGH THE AIR.

THE DEVIL BOUGHT A PIECE OF PROPERTY AT THE EDGE OF THE STRIP AND STARTED HIRING PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T BE MISSED: RUNAWAYS, THE UNDOCUMENTED, THE HOMELESS.

HE BEGAN TO **BUILD.**

A TOWER **ROSE** FROM THE DIRT, WHITE MARBLE WITH FLASHING LIGHTS.

EX LUX

THE **DEVIL** WAS **BACK.**

WE MIGHT NOT LIKE TO ADMIT IT, BUT WE'D ALL **MISSED** HIM.

"***LUCIFER,*** FIRST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE ANGELS, ***LORD OF HELL,*** GAVE UP HIS KINGDOM AND CHASED THE ***PRESENCE*** OUT OF ***HEAVEN.***

"THEN HE LEFT OUR ***UNIVERSE*** BEHIND, IN THE CARE OF A ***CHILD,*** SWEARING ***NEVER*** TO RETURN.

"GOOD LESSON, RIGHT? INSPIRING STORY..."

COLD HEAVEN Part One: PRODIGAL SONS

...NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU **FALL,** YOU GOTTA GET RIGHT BACK UP AGAIN.

YOU **KNEW** HIM?

OH YEAH. WE WERE LIKE **THIS.**

ONE WEEK AGO.

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.

GET UP.

GABRIEL, WHO WAS ONCE THE *GOVERNOR OF EDEN* AND *GUARDIAN OF THE WEST.*

GABRIEL, WHO *BEDDED A DEMON,* WHO'S *LOST* HIS *GRACE,* WHO IS NOW AS *HUMAN* AS ADAM. GET UP, BROTHER.

WE ARE SENT UNTO *THEE* TO BRING YOU *GLAD TIDINGS.*

FUCK OFF.

DON'T YOU WANT YOUR *WINGS* BACK? YOUR *PLACE?*

YOU THINK YOU CAN COME IN *HERE* AND TEMPT *ME*, RAPHAEL? AND YOU, RAGUEL? WHAT DO EITHER OF YOU KNOW ABOUT *TEMPTATION*?

YOUR IDEA OF SIN IS *SNICKERING* WHEN A WHEEL-SHAPED CHERUB SLIPS AND *ROLLS* DOWNHILL.

YOU ARE *NEEDED*, GABRIEL.

THE SILVER CITY IS OPEN TO YOU ONCE MORE. CAN YOU REALLY SAY YOU DON'T *LONG* TO RETURN, EVEN FOR AN HOUR?

YOU RENTING IT OUT BY THE HOUR NOW?

CLASSY.

THE *SERPENT* TOOK YOUR *HEART.*

IT MUST BE AGONY TO WALK AROUND LIKE THAT, A *DAMNED* THING.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO GET IT BACK?

WHAT WOULD I DO?

WHAT *WOULDN'T* I?

I SEE YOU THERE, *LORIN HAMMON.* I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU HAVE REMAINED AWAKE TO WITNESS THIS, BUT I PERCEIVE THE TRUE CAUSE OF YOUR SUFFERING.

GO NOW FROM THIS SINFUL PLACE AND DO NOT RETURN.

EXLUX

MY LORD--

--SHOULD I SUMMON SOMEONE?

NO.

I WILL HAVE VISITORS SOON ENOUGH.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH FAMILY. MY FAMILY IN PARTICULAR.

STAY IN ONE PLACE TOO LONG AND ONE OF THEM INEVITABLY SHOWS UP.

SOONER OR LATER, THERE WILL BE AN OFFER I CANNOT REFUSE.

BUT...YOUR WOUND? IT MUST PAIN YOU.

LIFE IS PAIN, PRUFLAS.

WASN'T THAT ONCE OUR MOTTO?

ANYWAY, I AIM TO ENJOY OPENING NIGHT.

I ADMIT, I'VE BEEN STARVED FOR CONVERSATION.

IF ANGELS DANCE ON THE HEAD OF A PIN, THE ***SILVER CITY*** IS THAT PIN.

METATRON, CHANCELLOR OF HEAVEN.

YOU COULDN'T HAVE ***CLEANED HIM UP*** BEFORE YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE? HE STINKS OF MORTALITY.

THAT'S JUST THE CHEAP WHISKEY.

AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMIND ME I DON'T BELONG UPSTAIRS.

IT'S NOT LIKE I ***ASKED*** TO COME.

PUT ASIDE YOUR ANGER, GABRIEL.

THERE IS A ***SERVICE*** WE REQUIRE OF YOU.

IN THE TOWER OF UNENDING HIGH, IN THE ***PRIMUM MOBILE,*** SITS THE THRONE OF LIGHT. AND FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, IT HAS SAT EMPTY. FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, THE ANGELS HAVE WAITED FOR THE ***PRESENCE*** TO RETURN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

LOOK THROUGH THE FISSURE. LOOK, AND SEE WHAT MIGHT FIRST SEEM TO BE A DYING STAR. LOOK, AND ***DESPAIR.***

FATHER.

IS HE...?

DEAD? IT SEEMS SO. HE DOES NOT STIR.

HOW... HOW IS THAT *POSSIBLE?*

I KNOW NOT. THE VERY *FABRIC* OF *CREATION* SHREDS AROUND THE *THOUGHT* OF IT.

ONLY THE *ARCHANGELS* HAVE BEEN ALLOWED INTO THIS ROOM. IF THE OTHERS WERE TO DISCOVER THIS...

...OR THE *DUKES OF HELL...*

...OR GODS FROM *OTHER* PANTHEONS.

NO ONE MUST KNOW.

I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO FIND HIS *MURDERER.* FIND OUT HOW IT WAS DONE. DO THAT AND YOU WILL HAVE A NEW HEART, NEW WINGS. YOU WILL BE AS YOU *WERE.*

IT FALLS TO US TO *REORDER* THE *UNIVERSE.*

WHY ME, METATRON?

TO HIDE THE INVESTIGATION FROM THE OTHERS. I AM *TRUSTING* YOU. DO NOT FAIL ME, GABRIEL.

WHAT DOES IT MATTER? OUR FATHER IS DEAD! WE ARE *NOTHING! NOTHING* IS OUR BEGIN-NING AND OUR END.

THERE IS NO ONE TO *FORGIVE* ME. NO ONE TO *RESTORE* ME!

NOTHING.

WE ARE THE ***HOST OF THE PRESENCE!*** WE CARRY HIS ***WORD.***

OUR MAKER IS GONE, BUT WHAT HE MADE IS HIS LEGACY.

HE MADE ***US.***

EVEN THE ***LEAST*** OF US. EVEN YOU.

WORD HAS COME TO US THAT THE ***SERPENT*** HAS RETURNED. LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR IS ON THE EARTH.

HIS TIMING IS ***EXQUISITE,*** WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

"THEY MET, OUT IN THE VOID.

"LUCIFER WAS THE ***LAST ONE*** TO SEE OUR LORD.

"AND YOU ***KNOW*** THE GRUDGE HE BEARS."

IF NOTHING ELSE WILL MOTIVATE YOU, LET ***VENGEANCE*** GUIDE YOUR HAND.

I HAVE WALKED THROUGH A DARK NEBULA JUST SOUTH OF THE EASTERN-MOST STAR IN ORION'S BELT AND FELT THE ELECTRICITY *DANCE* OVER MY SKIN. I HAVE PASSED BETWEEN MULTIVERSES. I HAVE STOOD ON THE *PILLARS* OF CREATION.

YET THE SHEER AUDACITY OF THIS WORLD-- THE HEADY COMBINATION OF *PERVERSITY, DESPAIR* AND *ENNUI*--REALLY IS UNIQUE.

ONE CERTAINLY *HOPES* SO.

YOU CAN TELL THE GOD WHO MADE IT WAS AN *ECCENTRIC,* AT THE VERY LEAST.

WELL, YOU WOULD KNOW.

UNGFF!

MORNINGSTAR!

PREPARE TO *DIE*.

OH, NEVER *DOUBT* MY READINESS.

STAND AND *FACE* ME, LIGHT-BRINGER!

AND WHY EXACTLY WOULD I DO THAT?

HAVE A DRINK. ON THE HOUSE.

RUMOR HAS IT YOU'VE TURNED INTO SOMETHING OF A *LUSH*.

NO JUDGMENT. I DON'T JUST LOVE THE SINNER...

...I LOVE THE SIN.

THE HOST HAVE INVESTED ME WITH THEIR *STRENGTH*. THEY HAVE GIFTED ME WITH THIS BLADE.

WELL, BULLY FOR YOU.

MURDERER!

POT, MEET KETTLE.

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT BLAMING **ME** FOR THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR AFFAIRS.

BECAUSE, IF SO, THERE'S A MAGICIAN AND A BAT-WINGED LADY YOU ARE SELLING **STRIKINGLY** SHORT.*

I AM BLAMING YOU FOR ***KILLING OUR FATHER!***

*See Hellblazer #66.

THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

IF HE WERE DEAD, I'D KNOW.

AND I'D DEFINITELY KNOW IF I'D ***DONE*** IT.

OF COURSE IT WAS YOU. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY YOU.

ASK ANY CHILD WHO WANTS TO ***KILL GOD*** AND THEY'D SAY: ***THE DEVIL.***

AND THAT'S WHY ***CHILDREN*** MAKE SUCH ***WONDERFUL*** DETECTIVES.

OMNISCIENT, OMNIPOTENT AND OMNIPRESENT. WHATEVER ***HAPPENED***, WHATEVER YOU ***THINK*** HAPPENED, IT WAS PART OF ***HIS DESIGN.***

THAT ***OLD BASTARD*** NEVER DID ANYTHING WITHOUT A ***PLAN.***

NOW ***STOP SWINGING*** THAT THING AT ME.

YOU'RE ***BLEEDING.***

I DO NOT HAVE THE POWER I ONCE DID.

A FACT I AM FINDING *MOST* INCONVENIENT.

BUT PERHAPS THERE IS YET SOMETHING I CAN DO.

I HAVE... HOW SHALL I *PUT* THIS...?

...CONNECTIONS IN *LOW PLACES.*

WHEN I SAID YOU WERE BLEEDING, I DIDN'T MEAN FROM YOUR *HAND.*

SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME THAT MOST THINGS COME *FULL CIRCLE.*

HOW ANNOYING TO THINK THAT MIGHT BE TRUE.

OH, THIS.

THERE'S A SPLINTER OF SOME *SUBTLE MATTER* IN MY SIDE, *WORMING* ITS *COLD* WAY TOWARD MY HEART.

THAT'S WHY I CAME HOME.

YOU DON'T LOOK GUILTY AT ALL, COMING BACK HERE WITH THAT WOUND.

FOUGHT SOMEONE, DID YOU? SOMEONE POWERFUL, I'D GUESS. DID YOU WIN?

I DIDN'T KILL HIM.

THEY CALL YOU THE PRINCE OF LIES FOR A REASON.

I TEMPT, I DECEIVE, I TRICK. I am CRUEL and I am RUTHLESS, BUT I DISLIKE BEING FORESWORN.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I am GOING TO HELP YOU DISCOVER HIS MURDERER.

WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?

BECAUSE NO ONE GETS TO KILL GOD BUT ME.

AND BECAUSE HE WAS MY FATHER, TOO.

SOMETIMES THINGS CHANGE OVER MILLENNIA. SOMETIMES THINGS CHANGE OVERNIGHT.

YOU'RE SAYING YOU REALLY SAW ANGELS?

THAT'S *STUPID.*

WHEN I WAS A KID, MY DAD USED TO TALK ABOUT THEM.

ABOUT HOW THE *PROPHET* WAS GOING TO BECOME ONE WHEN HE DIED. I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN* THEY'D BE SCARY AS SHIT.

GOD IS DEAD

JUST WHEN WE THINK WE *KNOW* HOW THE STORY *GOES...*

THIS THE SAME DAD WHO KICKED YOU *OUT* WHEN YOU WERE *FIFTEEN?*

...THERE'S A *TWIST.*

THE SAME GUY WHO LET SOMEONE PERFORM AN *EXORCISM* ON YOU BECAUSE YOU *TALKED BACK?*

HE CALLED IT "CASTING OUT SPIRITS," BUT YEAH, THAT'S THE ONE.

I GUESS EVEN A *REAL DICK* CAN BE RIGHT SOMETIMES.

AFTER BEING RAZED, HELL REBUILT ITSELF ONCE MORE, ALTHOUGH IT LEANED HEAVILY ON THE CLASSICS.

STILL, EVERYONE SAYS THAT WITH THE BEACHFRONT CONDOS ON THE RIVER OF FIRE AND FIGURE SKATING ON THE LAKE OF BLOOD, IT'S CURRENTLY THE FINEST PLACE IN ***ANY*** WORLD TO BE TORTURED FOR ALL OF ETERNITY.

BUMP

HEY, ***WATCH*** IT, BUDDY!

OUCH! SERIOUSLY, THAT FUCKING ***HURTS!***

EVERYONE WANTS TO ENSURE A REAL QUALITY EXPERIENCE.

LUCIFER! HE'S BACK!

LIES WILL CURRY NO FAVOR WITH ME.

I SWEAR IT, LADY MAZIKEEN. ON ALL MY FESTERING BOILS! HE OPENED A PORTAL TO HELL AND I SAW HIM.

THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THOSE HORRIBLE EYES. THEY SEE RIGHT INTO THE CRACKED PARTS OF...NEVER MIND ALL THAT. ONLY ONE THING MATTERS: LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR HAS RETURNED!

SULPHUR, OKLAHOMA.

"The devil, my friends, is a woman just now,
'Tis a woman who reigns in Hell."
— Owen Meredith, Lord Lytton

TEENA HORNICK GREW UP IN THIS LITTLE HOUSE. IT DIDN'T HOLD A LOT OF GOOD MEMORIES FOR HER, BUT ***GUESS WHO*** HAD TO COME BACK AND ***CLEAN IT OUT*** ANYWAY?

NOT TEENA'S LITTLE SISTER, WHO'D ***BARELY*** STAYED THROUGH THE ***FUNERAL.***

TOWARD THE END OF THEIR LIVES, HER PARENTS SPENT A LOT OF TIME AT ***GARAGE SALES,*** BUYING THINGS THEY SWORE WERE ***AMAZING*** BARGAINS. TEENA HAD BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF:

A CHROME ***HOTPOINT TOASTER*** THAT HER FATHER BELIEVED HE COULD REWIRE.

A ***TAXIDERMIED MOUSE*** IN A ***SHADOWBOX,*** POSED LIKE A TEACHER IN FRONT OF A BLACKBOARD.

THREE ***FONDUE POTS.***

THAT WAS JUST THE STUFF THEY GAVE AWAY.

TEENA WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT THEY'D KEPT FOR THEMSELVES.

OH, ***HELLO.***

SO LET ME GET THIS *STRAIGHT.*

YOU HAD TO TAKE TIME OFF *WORK,* GET THE SCHOOL TO CALL IN A *SUBSTITUTE,* AND DRIVE DOWN *HERE,* ALL BECAUSE YOUR SISTER COULDN'T *BOTHER* GETTING A BABYSITTER?

SHE THINKS YOU'RE *WORTHLESS.*

LET ME *GUESS,* LIZZIE TOLD YOU THAT YOU SHOULD BRING MOM'S DIAMONDS TO HER AND YOU TWO COULD GO THROUGH THEM TOGETHER.

DON'T TELL ME YOU WERE *STUPID* ENOUGH TO *BELIEVE* THAT.

SHE'LL TAKE THE *BIG* ONES. THE *NICE* ONES. YOU'LL GET WHATEVER'S LEFT.

AFTER ALL, *SHE'S* GOING TO PASS THEM DOWN TO HER KIDS.

KIDS, THEY *RUIN* EVERY-THING.

BUT MAYBE *SHE* NEVER NEEDS TO *KNOW* YOU *FOUND* ANY RINGS.

EX LUX, LOS ANGELES.

DOES IT HURT?

INDESCRIBABLY. ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU DO THAT.

I CAN'T SEEM TO CATCH HOLD OF THE SHARD.

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE.

GABRIEL, I HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS THE ADVERSARY, THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, LORD OF THIS WORLD. WHEN I SAY SOMETHING HURTS, DON'T DAWDLE WITH THE TWEEZERS.

COLD HEAVEN Part Two: LADY LUCIFER

I GOT A PIECE.

THE METAL IS UNUSUAL. IT MOVES.

I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE.

SOMETIMES I CAN FEEL IT MOVE.

I THINK IT'S WORKING ITS SLOW WAY TOWARD MY HEART.

GOOD THING YOU HAVEN'T GOT ONE.

OF COURSE, THANKS TO YOU, NEITHER DO I.

SO SLIPPERY, I CAN'T--

aaah!

I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

IT SEEMED TO REALLY *LIKE* YOU.

YOU SAID YOU SAW THE METAL SOMEWHERE ELSE...?

OUR *FATHER.* A BIG CHUNK OF IT WAS STICKING OUT OF HIM.

SO HE WAS SLAIN BY THE SAME WEAPON THAT HIT ME. INTERESTING.

THE METAL IS BLACK AND SLIMY. LIKE IT'S MOVING. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DESCRIBE IT.

TOO BAD YOU CAN'T GET A GOOD LOOK YOURSELF. IF YOU WERE ONE OF THOSE DEMONS WHO CAN *BEND THEM-SELVES* AROUND AND STRETCH--

ENOUGH.

I'M THE ONE WHO FOUND OUR FIRST *CLUE.*

I GUESS I'M AN INVESTIGATIVE *GENIUS.*

I BELIEVE YOUR CLUE DETERMINES WHERE OUR *FIRST STOP* OUGHT TO BE.

SURELY SUCH A MALIGN METAL MUST COME FROM A MISBEGOTTEN LAND. LET'S START WITH THE ONE WE KNOW BEST.

FELL.

SHIT.

"I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE JUST *TAKING OFF.*"

BUS STATION. NEWARK, NJ.

IT'S THE *FEATHER.* I FEEL LIKE IT'S *PULLING ME* SOMEWHERE.

THAT'S SUCH *BULLSHIT!*

AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITHOUT YOU? EVERYONE ELSE AROUND HERE IS *STRUNG OUT* OR *SPUN OUT.*

I *THINK* I'LL BE BACK.

I JUST KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO *DO,* EVEN IF I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT *IS* YET.

THAT'S THE SAME *RELIGIOUS SHIT* YOU GREW UP WITH, EXCEPT NOW YOU'RE DOING IT TO *YOURSELF!*

SMOKING IS *ILLEGAL* ANYWHERE IN THE BUILDING. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO *PUT THAT OUT.*

FUCK OFF!

AND *YOU* CAN FUCK OFF, *TOO,* LORIN!

"I DON'T THINK GOING TO HELL'S SUCH A GREAT IDEA..."

...YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY *IN CHARGE* ANYMORE.

YOU'LL *LIKE* IT THERE. THEY HAVE VERY *BIG* *TWEEZERS.*

SO, ARE YOU GOING TO *TELL ME* WHO ATTACKED YOU-- OUT IN *SPACE* OR WHEREVER?

BECAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE THAT COULD BE OUR *SECOND* CLUE.

I FOUGHT *MYSELF* OUT IN THE VOID.

AND SINCE THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE,* I THINK WE CAN *EXTRAPOLATE* THAT WHATEVER IT WAS THAT ATTACKED ME WISHED TO *HIDE* ITS IDENTITY.

SO, YOU'RE SAYING THAT WHOEVER KILLED THE PRESENCE *LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE YOU?* IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?

IT HAS a *FELL* OF a *PUNCH LINE.*

ONCE WE FIND THE *PROVENANCE* OF THE METAL *SHARD,* WE WILL BE ABLE TO DISCOVER THE *NATURE* OF OUR *COMEDIAN.*

AND YOU THINK HE'S THROUGH THAT PORTAL?

I THINK IF YOU CONSIDER WHO MIGHT WANT TO KILL BOTH *GOD* AND THE *DEVIL,* THERE'S NO *HIGHER CONCENTRATION* OF SUSPECTS THAN IN HELL.

SULPHUR, OKLAHOMA.

WE *HEARD* YOU WERE IN TOWN, TEENA, AND WE'RE SO *GLAD* YOU COULD *MAKE TIME* TO SEE US.

BACK IN SCHOOL, TEENA AND KEVIN USED TO GO OUT. TEENA THOUGHT THEY WERE IN LOVE.

AT LEAST UNTIL HE DUMPED HER FOR HER THEN-BEST FRIEND, GRACE.

OUR DAUGHTER JUST GOT *MARRIED*. ISN'T THAT *SOME-THING*?

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

THE WORST PART IS TEENA MISSES GRACE FAR MORE THAN SHE DOES KEVIN.

BUT TELL US ABOUT *YOU*. WHAT'S IT *LIKE* TO BE A TEACHER?

I CAN'T *IMAGINE* BEING STUCK IN HIGH SCHOOL *FOREVER*.

BUT I GUESS *SOMEONE* HAS TO CIVILIZE THOSE LITTLE *VAGRANTS*, RIGHT?

THEY JUST *LOVE* RUBBING HOW HAPPY THEY ARE *IN YOUR FACE*, DON'T THEY?

EXCUSE ME. I HAVE TO USE YOUR BATHROOM.

OF COURSE. FIRST DOOR ON THE LEFT.

THEY *HATE* YOU.

NO, WORSE. THEY THINK YOU'RE *PATHETIC*. THEY *ALWAYS* HAVE.

WHAT'S THE *GERMAN WORD* FOR "THE GLEE YOU FEEL WHEN THE *FIRST GIRL* YOU HAD SEX WITH TURNS OUT TO BE *WAAAY* LESS HOT THAN YOUR CURRENT WIFE"?

SHUT UP!

OH *GOOD*, WE'RE TALKING NOW.

LET ME OUT. I COULD *FIX THINGS* FOR YOU.

WITH YOUR *SISTER.*

WITH *KEVIN* AND *GRACE.*

IMAGINE THE *LOOK* ON THEIR FACES.

IMAGINE HOW *SURPRISED* THEY'D BE.

IMAGINE HOW *MUCH* IT WOULD *HURT.*

SHHHIING

WELL, THIS IS DIFFERENT.

I THINK WE SHOULD CALL OUR DETECTIVE AGENCY IDLE HANDS INVESTIGATIONS.

I LIKE WHAT THEY'VE DONE WITH THE PLACE.

OR, HOW ABOUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE THE DEVIL TO PAY, NO LITERALLY.

OR, THE DEVIL DOES CARE, INC.

MOTTO, "WE DO A HELL OF A JOB!"

EVERY ANGEL'S HALLELUJAH MUST HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY FERVENT THE DAY YOU GOT KICKED OUT OF HEAVEN.

LOOOOOORD...

OH, HELLO. YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE LILIM.

...BEWAAAARE...

I WASN'T AS FUNNY BACK THEN.

AND DON'T SAY ANYTHING DISPARAGING ABOUT **NOW**--I CAN SEE IT ON THE **TIP** OF YOUR TONGUE.

NOT AT **ALL.**

I FIND YOU **VASTLY** AMUSING.

WHOSE **BRILLIANT** IDEA WAS IT TO COME HERE?

MINE.

IN LUCIFER'S NAME!

DO YOU KNOW THESE GUYS?

NO.

QUICKLY, MY LORD, BEFORE THEIR QUEEN SENDS REINFORCEMENTS.

QUEEN?

YES, MAZIKEEN, DAUGHTER OF LILITH.

QUEEN OF HELL.

BEELZEBUB'S PALACE. HELL.

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHAT A PLEASURE IT IS TO WELCOME OUR OWN ***LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR,*** BACK FROM HIS JOURNEYS.

WHAT'S THIS, ***AN ANGEL?***

NOTHING GETS PAST YOU.

RAISE YOUR ***GLASSES*** TO LUCIFER, OUR LOST KING!

IN *YOUR NAMMME,* WE HAVE CAMPAIGNED. IN *YOUR NAMMME,* WE HAVE ZZTRIVEN TO TAKE BACK THE *INFERNAL LANDZZZ.*

AND I SUPPOSE, BEELZEBUB, YOU AND ASMODEUS WOULD *RULE* IT IN *MY NAME* AS WELL?

THIS IS WHY YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT *POLITICS* OR *RELIGION* AT THE DINNER TABLE.

WHAT WE NEED IS *STABILITY* IN HELL.

ALL THESE *WARS* ARE REALLY *ERODING* OUR TAX BASE.

IT'S NOT LIKE THE *OLD* DAYS.

THAT'S WHY I SUPPORTED BEELZEBUB'S BID TO TAKE OVER *EVERYTHING--*

--HEAVEN, HELL, AND WHAT'S IN BETWEEN. THE *HAT TRICK.*

WHAT?

NOTHING TO DO WITH *YOU.*

I LIKE YOUR SCARS.

UM.

LET ME GIVE YOU A PRETTY *NEW ONE.*

ACTUALLY, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO **ASK**. IF I DESCRIBED A **METAL--BLACK,** BUT KIND OF **OILY,** WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MIGHT BE?

I MIGHT HAVE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

IN BEELZEBUB'S PRIVATE CHAMBER.

BUT IT WOULD BE VERY **DANGEROUS** TO ENTER WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION.

WE NEED YOU HERE, LUCIFER.

TO **INSPIRE** US.

THINGS JUST AREN'T THE SAME WITHOUT YOU.

AHHH, GOOD. I HAVE ZZZOMMME QUEZTIONZZZ FOR OUR GUEZZZT.

I **TOLD** YOU IT WAS DANGEROUS.

MOMENTS LATER...

AAUUUGH!

WHAT IZZ LUZZZIFER DOING HERE, ANGEL?

WHAT IZZ HIZZ *PLAN?*

I DON'T KNOW!

EVEN IF I *THOUGHT* I DID, HE WOULD HAVE ONLY TOLD ME WHAT HE WANTED ME TO *REPEAT* TO YOU.

HE'S THE GUY WHO MAKES YOU SHARPEN YOUR OWN KNIFE RIGHT BEFORE HE *STABS* YOU IN THE BACK WITH IT.

AUGGGGGGH!

MY LORD, WE'RE UNDER *ATTACK!*

I'LL RETURNNNN.

DONNN'T GO ANNNYWHERE.

WHEN I FIND YOU, BROTHER, I *SWEAR* I WILL--

FINISH THAT SENTENCE, I DARE YOU.

--KISS YOU *RIGHT* ON YOUR SMUG MOUTH?

MEANWHILE, IN OKLAHOMA...

THIS IS COMPLETELY UNFAIR.

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO LET ME OUT.

I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THE STABBING.

SERIOUSLY, THIS SUCKS.

THE HIGHEST PEAK OF HELL, WHERE LUCIFER'S *OWN* THRONE ONCE RESTED.

THERE'S STILL A THRONE THERE, BUT IT NO LONGER BELONGS TO HIM.

MAZIKEEN.

BOW, SON OF THE MORNING! ON YOUR ***KNEES,*** ARCHANGEL!

PROSTRATE YOURSELVES BEFORE THE ***QUEEN OF HELL!***

NO. HE MAY REMAIN STANDING. I WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED IF HE BENT HIS HEAD TO ANYONE.

WHO DARES ***HOLD*** YOU HERE?

I AM THE RULER OF ***HELL***. I AM THE ***LIGHTBRINGER***. DO NOT ***PRESUME*** ON OUR OLD FRIENDSHIP.

GUARDS, ***LEAVE US.***

BUT MY LADY, THEY WERE SEEN WITH THE DEMONS. ASMODEUS HIMSELF--

I SAID ***LEAVE US!***

YOU KEPT MY MARK. I AM TOUCHED.

YOU SAID I WOULD BE A COWARD IF I DID NOT.

I DIDN'T THINK YOU CARED WHAT I HAD TO SAY.

SORRY TO ***INTERRUPT*** ALL THESE FOND REMEMBRANCES, BUT CAN WE GET THIS ***OVER*** WITH? ASK HER WHAT WE ***CAME*** TO ASK HER.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU NOTICED, BUT I WAS ON ***FIRE*** BEFORE.

HELL ***SUCKS.***

NO OFFENSE INTENDED, MY LADY.

I'VE SEEN NOTHING LIKE THE METAL YOU DESCRIBED.

BUT YOU SHOULD BE MORE CONCERNED THAT A PIECE OF YOU IS MISSING.

WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH OF YOU WILL BE LEFT IF YOU DON'T REMOVE THE SHARD SOON. MY MOTHER COULD TELL YOU MORE.

YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD.

NOT EVERY-WHERE.

LILITH LIVES ON IN THE DREAMS OF MEN.

NOW YOU HAVE WHAT ANSWERS I CAN GIVE YOU. YOU SHOULD GO.

I COULD FREE YOU. COMMAND ME, MAZIKEEN. COMMAND ME AND I WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

YOU HAVE ALREADY FAILED ME, MY LORD.

GO. THAT'S THE ONLY COMMAND I HAVE TO GIVE YOU.

AS FOR YOU, ARCHANGEL, I WOULD MAKE A BETTER MASTER.

I WANT NOTHING FROM HELL. NOTHING.

THAT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE THE CASE.

WAS THIS WHOLE TRIP AN EXCUSE TO SEE HER? JUST TELL ME THAT.

I CAME HERE LOOKING FOR SUSPECTS, FOR MOTIVE AND OPPORTUNITY.

BUT WHAT I FOUND, I MUST CONSIDER FURTHER.

NOW WHAT?

NOW, WE'RE GOING TO THE ONE PLACE WHERE LILITH IS STILL ALIVE.

WE'RE GOING TO THE DREAMING.

OH, GREAT. FANTASTIC.

GOOD THING THE KING OF DREAMS ISN'T FAMOUS FOR BEING AN ENORMOUS GRUDGE-HOLDER.

JOHNSON

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA.

MEDJINE PARKER WAS BORN IN **PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI.** SHE'S BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES FOR **EIGHT MONTHS.**

HER NEW FAMILY'S WHOLE **CHURCH** HAD FUNDRAISERS FOR HER ADOPTION, SO SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SEEM **UNGRATEFUL.**

MEDJINE!

A WRINKLE IN TIME

MEDJINE, WHAT HAVE I **TOLD YOU** ABOUT GETTING **DIRT** ON YOUR SKIRT? I SWEAR, YOU ARE THE **DIRTIEST CHILD.**

CARRIE, TAKE HER TO THE BATHROOM AND DUST HER OFF.

I CAN DO IT MYSELF.

IN THIS HOUSE, WE **DON'T** TALK BACK. HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU? WE'LL TALK ABOUT YOUR **PUNISHMENT** AFTER CHURCH.

"We must remember that Satan has his miracles, too."
— John Calvin

BUT SOMETIMES SHE CAN'T HELP WISHING SHE WAS BACK IN THE ORPHANAGE WITH HER BROTHER AND HER FRIENDS.

HER NEW FAMILY DOESN'T TREAT HER LIKE THEIR **OTHER** KIDS.

THEY DON'T THINK OF HER LIKE THEIR OTHER KIDS, EITHER.

I THOUGHT SHE'D BE A LITTLE GIRL, BUT SHE'S PRACTICALLY A WOMAN ALREADY.

I'M AFRAID ONE OF OUR BOYS IS GOING TO START **LOOKING.**

THE **DEVIL'S** USING HER TO GET A FOOTHOLD IN THIS FAMILY.

LUCIFER HESITATES.

ONE MAY ENTER THE ***DREAMING*** THROUGH THE ***GATES OF IVORY*** OR THE ***GATES OF HORN.***

ONE ADMITS DREAMS THAT ARE ***LIES*** AND DECEPTIONS, THE OTHER ADMITS ***TRUTHS.***

HE'S NOT SURE WHICH WAY IS MEANT FOR HIM.

MAZIKEEN SAID THAT LILITH WASN'T DEAD ***EVERYWHERE.***

KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR SOME DREAM PANTS.

THE DEAD LIVE AGAIN IN ***DREAMS.***

COLD HEAVEN Part Three: Mothers of All

HE WONDERS IF THERE'S A VERSION OF LUCIFER HERE, TOO...

...ONE THAT STAYED BEHIND AFTER ***HE*** DEPARTED.

HE WONDERS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MEET YOURSELF IN DREAMS.

HE DOES NOT LIKE PUTTING HIMSELF IN THE POWER OF SOMEONE WHO HAS CAUSE TO MISLIKE HIM.

HE DOES NOT LIKE PUTTING HIMSELF IN THE POWER OF ANYONE AT ALL.

WHOA. THE PRINCE OF FREAKING DARKNESS.

THE BOSS WANTED ME TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO HAVE A NICE **VISIT.**

I'M SUPPOSED TO TAKE YOU WHERE YOU WANT TO GO, UNLESS IT'S **HIS CASTLE.** IF YOU WANT TO GO THERE, I'M SUPPOSED TO TAKE YOU TO ONE OF THE **SOFT PLACES** AND LEAD YOU AROUND IN CIRCLES FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

OR DROP YOU INTO A PARTICULARLY NASTY DREAM.

SORRY. IT'S NOTHING **PERSONAL.**

DID YOU SEE THAT?

WE HAVE COME FOR LILITH'S COUNSEL.

RIGHT-O. THIS WAY.

EVE, WE'RE LOOKING FOR--

LILITH, I WOULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED TO FIND YOU HERE. WITH **HER.**

I MIGHT SAY THE SAME OF YOU, TRICKSTER.

THIS IS THE SECOND NIGHT MEDJINE HAS TO ***SLEEP*** IN A ***CLOSET.***

SHE CAN HEAR THE REST OF THEM HAVING DINNER. SHE CAN SMELL THE ***CHICKEN*** THEY'RE EATING.

SHE GOT A SANDWICH MADE WITH BREAD SOAKED IN WATER.

SHE IS BEING PUNISHED FOR MESSAGING HER BROTHER, LEANDRE, WHO WAS ***ADOPTED*** BY A SINGLE LADY IN NEW JERSEY.

THEY WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ***SEPARATED,*** BUT THEY WERE.

SOME OF WHAT SHE SENT WAS IN ***CREOLE.*** THE PARKERS DON'T LIKE THAT.

THEY THOUGHT SHE WAS SAYING ***BAD THINGS*** ABOUT THEM.

THEY SWITCHED HER WITH A PIECE OF PLASTIC TUBING.

AFTER, FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD TOMMY PARKER ASKED IF THE ***BRUISES*** WOULD EVEN SHOW, SINCE HER SKIN WAS SO ***DARK.***

SHE HAD TO ***BITE*** HER ***TONGUE*** TO KEEP FROM GETTING IN MORE ***TROUBLE.***

WHEN SHE ARRIVED AT THE PARKER HOUSE, SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE STRICT BUT BASICALLY ***GOOD*** PEOPLE.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE GOOD TO TAKE IN AN ***ORPHAN,*** RIGHT?

THE PARKERS BELIEVE THEMSELVES TO BE GOOD PEOPLE, TOO.

THEY CAN'T ***STAND THE SIGHT*** OF ANYONE WHO MAKES THEM ***DOUBT*** IT.

SO MY DAUGHTER TOLD YOU TO COME HERE?

MAYBE SHE REMEMBERS ME WITH A *LITTLE* FONDNESS AFTER ALL.

I IMAGINE SHE REMEMBERS YOU AS YOU WERE.

NO BETTER AND NO WORSE.

IS THAT HOW YOU HOPE SHE REMEMBERS *YOU*, MORNINGSTAR?

EVE'S CAVE. THE DREAMING.

YOU COULD HAVE HAD HEAVEN, YOU KNOW. YOU HAD ***HELL.*** HUMANS HAVE CALLED YOU THE ***PRINCE OF THIS WORLD*** FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE CAN REMEMBER.

YOUR PROBLEM IS THAT YOU--LIKE THE MARX FELLOW--NEVER WANTED TO BE PRESIDENT OF ***ANY*** CLUB THAT WOULD HAVE ***YOU*** AS A MEMBER.

I DON'T THINK THAT'S HOW THAT SAYING GOES.

YOU WANT WHAT YOU CAN'T ***HAVE.*** TOO BAD YOU'VE ALREADY HAD ***EVERYTHING.***

POOR SPOILED LUCIFER. ***DADDY'S FAVORITE.*** NO HILL LEFT TO CLIMB?

POOR GHOST. SO MUCH TEMPEST, SO LITTLE TARGET.

YOU CAME FOR A STORY ABOUT A ***SHARD.*** WELL, I'LL GIVE YOU ONE.

"ONCE, WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW, ***AZAZEL*** WAS NOT SO CORRUPT AS HE BECAME."

"I GUESS NONE OF US WERE."

"HE WAS AN EATER OF SINS. HE SAT UP ON A HILL. THE VILLAGES WOULD GIVE OVER THEIR SINS TO A ***GOAT*** AND SEND THAT GOAT INTO THE WILDERNESS.

"AZAZEL WOULD EAT THE GOAT AND THE VILLAGE'S SINS ALONG WITH IT.

"BUT THE MORE SINS AZAZEL ATE, THE MORE HIS ***HUNGER*** GREW."

REALLY? I MEAN, IS THAT ***TRUE*** OR DID THEY ONLY ***THINK*** THEIR SINS WERE GONE?

WHAT DO YOU CARE?

I DON'T KNOW. IT'S A ***STORY.*** I WANT TO KNOW. IT MAKES A ***DIFFERENCE*** TO THE STORY. IS AZAZEL A ***CON ARTIST?*** DOES HE WANT TO ***HELP*** PEOPLE?

I MEAN, THE STORY IS ABOUT ***HIM,*** RIGHT?

WHY DON'T YOU JUST WAIT AND FIND OUT?

WHY WON'T YOU JUST ***TELL*** ME? IS HE THE HERO OR THE VILLAIN?

THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM IN A NUTSHELL, EVE. YOU WANT EVERYTHING SIMPLE. YOU WANT TO BE SPOON-FED.

AND ***YOUR*** PROBLEM IS THAT YOU NEVER ASK THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

WHEN THE SNAKE OFFERED YOU A BITE FROM THE FRUIT OF KNOWLEDGE, ***YOU*** WERE PROBABLY ALL "OH, NO THANKS, I KNOW EVERYTHING ALREADY."

PEACE.

YOU'VE GOT ALL THE TIME TO DEBATE THIS.

YEAH, IT'S THE ***ETERNAL EX-WIVES CLUB*** OVER HERE.

"AZAZEL WAS NO LONGER CONTENT WITH THE SINS HE RECEIVED. HE WAS SPOTTED AROUND THE EDGES OF THE TOWN, WHISPERING.

"ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO DO EVEN GREATER MISDEEDS.

"PEOPLE INDULGED."

HUSBAND!

"***OVER***INDULGED, EVEN.

"NO ONE KNEW WHEN TO STOP."

"AND SO, FINALLY, THE ELDERS OF THE CLAN WENT TO A WISE WOMAN, ***OFRA ORI,*** AND ASKED HER HOW AZAZEL COULD BE DESTROYED."

AN ***IMMORTAL*** CAN ONLY BE KILLED BY ***ANOTHER*** IMMORTAL.

"THEY PRESSED HER FURTHER, FOR HE WAS THE ONLY IMMORTAL THEY KNEW."

SINCE AZAZEL HIMSELF IS IMMORTAL, I SUPPOSE THAT HE ***COULD*** BE KILLED WITH A ***PIECE OF HIMSELF.***

"THEY WENT AWAY AND PUZZLED OVER THIS...

"...UNTIL A GRAND-DAUGHTER OF THE CLAN CHIEF CAME UP WITH A ***GRUE-SOME*** SCHEME.

"A WOMAN OF THE VILLAGE ***PAINTED*** AND ***PERFUMED*** HERSELF, THEN DRESSED IN LINEN AND WENT TO AZAZEL."

"HE, WHO LOVED SIN SO MUCH, COULD HARDLY TURN HER AWAY. AND SO HE DALLIED WITH HER ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER. HE DALLIED WITH HER FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS AND AT THE ***END*** OF IT, SHE WAS WITH CHILD.

"SHE BORE HIM TWO SONS, ***TWINS.***

"SHE NAMED THEM ***NATAN*** AND ***CALEV.***

"WHERE NATAN WAS DARK, CALEV WAS LIGHT. WHERE NATAN LAUGHED, CALEV WAS QUIET. WHERE NATAN WAS BOLD, CALEV SHRANK BACK AND WAS AFRAID.

"FROM BIRTH, THEY WERE RAISED FOR A ***SINGLE PURPOSE.***

"WHEN THEY BECAME MEN, CALEV WAS PARTED FROM NATAN AND ***SLAIN.***

"NATAN ***NEVER KNEW*** WHY CALEV WAS SLAIN. MAYBE THERE WAS ***NO REASON.***

"THE VILLAGERS TOOK METAL WHICH HAD FALLEN FROM THE HEAVENS AND FORGED IT INTO A ***SWORD.***"

"THEN THEY BROUGHT THE SWORD TO NATAN SO THAT HE MIGHT USE IT TO KILL HIS FATHER.

"OVERWHELMED WITH THE ***HORROR*** OF THE DEED THAT HAD BEEN DONE AND THE HORROR OF THE DEED YET TO COME...

"...HE WANDERED THE WILDERNESS, WEEPING AND WHISPERING TO THE SWORD THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HIS ***BROTHER.***

"THE SWORD SOAKED UP ALL OF THOSE TEARS AND FURY AND READIED ITSELF. IT SANG WITH HIS GRIEF AND RAGE. IT ***SANG*** WITH ITS OWN DESIRE FOR ***VENGEANCE.***

"NATAN WENT TO AZAZEL AND CUT HIM DOWN.

"WHEN NATAN KILLED HIS FATHER, AZAZEL ***KNEW*** HIM FOR HIS OWN SON, AND IN THAT FINAL MOMENT PASSED TO HIM ALL OF HIS POWERS-- HIS IMMORTALITY, HIS KNOWLEDGE, ALL THAT HE HAD BEEN ***GIVEN*** WHEN HE WAS MADE.

"BUT HE PASSED TO HIM ALL OF THE ***SINS*** HE'D BEEN CARRYING AS WELL. AND THEY BURNT UNDER NATAN'S SKIN.

"HE STAGGERED BACK TO THE VILLAGE AND CUT DOWN EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM, BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW HIM FOR NATAN ANY LONGER. THEY CALLED HIM ***AZAZEL*** AS THEY DIED, AND AZAZEL HE BECAME."

"THE LORD SAID TO RAPHAEL: 'BIND AZAZEL HAND AND FOOT, AND CAST HIM INTO THE **DARKNESS**. MAKE AN OPENING IN THE DESERT, WHICH IS IN DUDAEL, AND CAST HIM THEREIN.'

"'PLACE UPON HIM ROUGH AND JAGGED ROCKS, AND COVER HIM WITH DARKNESS, AND LET HIM ABIDE THERE FOR EVER. AND ON THE DAY OF THE GREAT JUDGMENT HE SHALL BE CAST INTO THE FIRE.'

"AT LEAST THAT'S HOW THE BOOK OF **ENOCH** REMEMBERS IT.

"AND SO HE WAS, UNTIL HIS FLESH WORE AWAY AND HE REMEMBERED HIMSELF TO BE **NATAN** NO LONGER, BUT KNEW HIMSELF TO BE **AZAZEL**."

THAT **CAN'T** BE TRUE. AZAZEL WAS PART OF THE TRIUMVIRATE THAT **RULED HELL**. HOW COULD HE **NOT** BE... HIMSELF?

I am MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE **SWORD**.

"IT WAS BURIED THERE, **WITH** HIM, IN THE DESERT OF DUDAEL. AND WHEN HE ROSE, HE COULDN'T HAVE CARRIED IT. HIS **FLESH** WAS BURNT AWAY.

"SO, IT MUST STILL BE THERE."

SULPHUR, OKLAHOMA.

MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND YOU'RE ***GENUINELY*** WORRIED ABOUT THE STATE OF THEIR SOULS.

YOU'RE DOING YOUR CHRISTIAN DUTY.

AND DON'T FORGET TO ***SMILE!***

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED ***JESUS*** INTO YOUR HEART?

YOU GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.

THIS IS TRESPASSING. GET ON ***OUT*** OF HERE.

SCOOT!

COME IN, CHILDREN!

MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE.

WHY'S ALL YOUR **STUFF** PACKED UP?

BECAUSE I WON'T BE NEEDING IT ANYMORE.

WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE GOING. THANKS FOR...

NONSENSE. I BET YOU KIDS COULD USE A COLD **DRINK.** LEMONADE?

YEAH!

WE WANT LEMONADE!

WHEN ALL YOU'VE GOT IS A **STEAK KNIFE,** EVERYTHING STARTS TO LOOK LIKE STEAK.

AAAAAAH!

COME **ON.** NOW!

WE DON'T HAVE TO DO WHAT **YOU** SAY. YOU'RE NOT OUR **REAL** SISTER.

LEMONADE, EVERYONE!

HE MUST HAVE DONE IT. IT HAS TO BE HIM.

MATTHEW?

AZAZEL.

I WOULDN'T DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.

I WAS CHARGED WITH FINDING GOD'S MURDERER AND THAT'S WHAT I AM GOING TO DO.

MAYBE YOU'RE JUST USING THIS WHOLE INVESTIGATION AS AN EXCUSE TO HEAL YOURSELF, BUT I WOULD AVENGE OUR FATHER.

THIS BIRD IS GOING TO TAKE ME TO WHERE THE DREAM KING IS HIDING AZAZEL, AND THEN I AM GOING TO FINISH THIS MYSELF.

THAT BIRD ISN'T WHAT HE SEEMS.

WE REMEMBER WHAT YOU DON'T, GABRIEL.

YOUR DREAM REMEMBERS.

MATTHEW CABLE DIED IN THE DREAMING AND BECAME A RAVEN.

BUT THAT'S NOT MATTHEW CABLE.

LUCIFER...

LISTEN, THE BIG WAR LEFT US ALL A LITTLE DIS-ILLUSIONED.

THE BIG WAR?

THE WAR IN HEAVEN. DOESN'T GET BIGGER THAN THAT.

BUT WE STILL GOTTA SOLVE THE CASE.

ALL I WANT IS FOR EVERYTHING TO GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING.

WHEN THINGS MADE SENSE.

YOU WERE ALWAYS SUCH A SUCKER, GABRIEL, EVEN BACK THEN.

THIS IS A DREAM. WAKE UP!

WHERE DID HE GO?

LUCIFER'S GOT HIS OWN DREAM NOW.

LONG TIME NO SEE, UNCLE.

YOU'RE NOT REAL. *NONE* OF THIS IS REAL.

ELAINE BELLOC, DAUGHTER OF MICHAEL DEMIURGOS. ELAINE BELLOC, WHO HAD STEPPED INTO THE VOID THE ***PRESENCE*** LEFT WHEN HE DEPARTED THE UNIVERSE. BEFORE HIS DEMISE.

DOES IT MATTER?

I SUPPOSE NOT.

ELAINE BELLOC, WHO SHIRKED THOSE DUTIES.

YOU DIDN'T TELL ME HOW ***HARD*** IT WOULD BE. YOU SHOWED ME HOW TO MAKE WORLDS, BUT YOU NEVER TOLD ME HOW ***LONELY*** IT WAS TO BE THEIR GUARDIAN.

YOU NEVER TOLD ME HOW SUFFOCATING IT IS TO BE LOVED AND HATED FOR THINGS I NEVER EVEN ***DID*** AND NEVER EVEN ***WAS.***

I CAN'T HELP YOU. AND EVEN IF I COULD, IT'S NOT ***YOU*** I'M TALKING TO.

NO, YOU'RE TALKING TO YOUR-SELF.

IS THAT WHY YOU ***LEFT*** THE UNIVERSE?

I LEFT BECAUSE THE ENERGY OF GODHOOD IS ***BELIEF.*** NO ONE HERE BELIEVED IN ME--THEY DIDN'T EVEN ***KNOW*** ME. I WENT BACK TO MY OWN UNIVERSE, WHERE I ***BELONGED.***

IS IT WHY ***YOU*** LEFT? BECAUSE IT WAS LONELY AND HARD?

OH, WAIT, I ***KNOW*** WHY...

THIS DAYDREAM GROWS TIRESOME.

"YOU BELIEVE IN GOD, RIGHT?"

WELL, YOU *SHOULDN'T* BELIEVE IN HIM.

I MET A DEMON, AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE MADE ME DO? *KILL* MY FRIENDS. AND YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE?

IT WAS KIND OF GREAT. I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT HOW SAD I WAS THAT I COULDN'T DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN.

THEN *YOU* THREE CAME ALONG LIKE TRUSSED-UP LAMBS, READY TO BE SLAUGHTERED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT? LIFE'S NOT FAIR AND APPARENTLY *GOD* ISN'T EITHER.

I THINK IF A DEMON TELLS YOU SOMETHING, IT'S *PROBABLY* A TRICK.

I DIDN'T MEAN FOR ANY OF THIS TO HAPPEN.

PLEASE LET US GO. *PLEASE.* GOD WILL *FORGIVE* YOU IF YOU DO.

SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

:UGRNNNN!:

RUN!

YOU BETTER NOT COME AFTER ME OR I'M GOING TO **SMASH** THIS.

GOOD IDEA. YES, BREAK THE JAR.

YOU THINK HE'LL LISTEN TO *YOU*?

I DON'T KNOW.

JUST LET ME GO. PLEASE.

OPEN THE JAR. OPEN IT AND I WILL ***HELP*** YOU. I WILL ***KILL*** THE PERSON YOU'RE AFRAID OF. I WILL DO THE THING YOU'RE THINKING RIGHT NOW, THE ONE THAT'S TOO ***TERRIBLE*** TO ADMIT.

MEDJINE ISN'T SURE ***WHO*** THAT PROMISE IS FOR. SHE HATES THAT IT TEMPTS HER.

WEEOOOEEEOOOEEEOOOO

IT'S TOO LATE, ISN'T IT? THE POLICE ARE HERE.

I GUESS YOU WERE ***RIGHT*** ABOUT DEMONS.

YOU CAN'T TRUST THEM.

EEEOOOEEEOOOO

MEDJINE WAS A HERO. SHE SAVED HER SISTER. SHE WAS IN THE NEWPAPERS AND EVERYTHING. WHEN SHE WALKED INTO CHURCH, THE PASTOR GAVE HER A BIG HUG, EVEN THOUGH EVERYONE WAS IN MOURNING.

HER PARENTS EVEN LET HER CALL LEANDRE TO MAKE SURE HE WASN'T WORRIED.

EVERYTHING WAS FINE.

THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON TO WORRY.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL LET ME OUT...

"...WE BOTH KNOW I'M THE *ONLY* FRIEND YOU'VE GOT."

EVERYTHING SEEMS SO MUCH *SIMPLER* IN BLACK AND WHITE, NO?

AM I AWAKE?

no.

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AWAKE IN A LONG TIME.

WHY IS IT THAT WHENEVER YOU TELL ME THE *TRUTH*, IT FEELS LIKE LYING?

IT SEEMS THAT WAY BECAUSE YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO *SOLVE* THE MURDER.

BUT I ALREADY *KNOW* WHO DID IT.

JOHNSON

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA.

MEDJINE KNOWS THEY WISH HER BROTHER WAS ***ALIVE*** AND SHE WAS ***DEAD*** IN HIS PLACE.

SHE KNOWS BECAUSE THEY ***TOLD*** HER.

"The devil is an optimist if he thinks he can make people worse than they are." — Karl Kraus

THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO ***FORGIVE YOU*** FOR SURVIVING.

THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO ***LOVE YOU.***

THEY'RE GOING TO ***HURT YOU.***

I KNOW. I ALREADY KNOW ALL THAT.

IF YOU ***KNOW*** SOMEONE'S GOING TO ***HURT YOU,*** YOU HAVE TO HURT THEM ***FIRST.***

BACK WHERE I USED TO LIVE, THERE WAS THIS GUY WHO KEPT A ***PARROT,*** AND THE PARROT WOULD SAY THESE REALLY ***OBSCENE*** THINGS.

WORSE THAN YOU'RE IMAGINING.

AND ALL YOU COULD DO WAS ***IGNORE*** WHAT IT SAID.

YOU'RE A LOT LIKE THAT PARROT.

I AM A VERY IMPORTANT DEMON.

I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND YOU.

I'M SURE YOU ***CAN*** IMAGINE THE KIND OF STUFF TI POPO'S PARROT USED TO SAY.

SO IF YOU'RE ***NOT INTERESTED*** IN MY HELP, WHY DID YOU BRING ME ***BACK*** WITH YOU?

WHAT IF SOMEONE ***ELSE*** FOUND YOU AND LISTENED TO YOU AND ***LET YOU OUT?*** THAT WOULD BE BAD.

BESIDES, I HAVE NO ONE ***ELSE*** TO TALK TO.

THE DREAMING IS NOT A PLACE LIKE OTHER PLACES.

ITS VERY FORM SHIFTS AND EDDIES.

NIGHTMARES BLOW ACROSS ITS PLACID SURFACE, SWALLOWING UP EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH.

COLD HEAVEN Part Four: HOSTS

ALL LOGIC IS DREAM LOGIC.

THINGS EXIST HERE THAT ARE LOST IN OTHER PLACES. VESTIGES OF PEOPLE AND PLACES LONG GONE. SHADOW SELVES.

LUCIFER DOESN'T LIKE IT. HE WANTS OUT.

BUT THE REALM DOES NOT SEEM TO BE COOPERATING WITH HIM.

DO YOU THINK MORPHEUS IS *TOYING* WITH US?

NO, GABRIEL. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE LORD OF DREAMS HAS A FONDNESS FOR *GAMES* OR *JESTS* OR *FUN* OF ANY KIND.

HE'S GOT TO LIKE *WHIMSY*. I MEAN, JUST *LOOK* AT THIS PLACE.

I BET YOU WISH YOU HADN'T GIVEN UP YOUR MORNINGSTAR *POWERS* WHEN YOU FLEW OFF TO DO WHATEVER IT WAS YOU WERE DOING.

I LEFT HOME TO FIND MY FORTUNE. TO NO LONGER BE *CONSTRAINED* BY OUR FATHER'S NARROW WORLDVIEW.

BY OUR FATHER'S GIFTS. BY OUR FATHER'S *ANYTHING*.

HOW'S THAT WORKING OUT FOR YOU?

YOU KNOW A WAY OUT OF HERE, RIGHT?

THERE'S A *BACK DOOR*. THROUGH YOMI-NO-KUNI, LAND OF THE DEAD.

AND I BELIEVE I EVEN HAVE A WAY TO FIND IT.

Pray every day

MEDJINE?

YEAH?

THE *DEMON* DIDN'T GET YOU, DID IT?

WHAT DEMON?

DADDY SAYS WHEN YOU CAME HERE FROM HAITI YOU *BROUGHT A DEMON* WITH YOU, AND THAT'S WHAT *LEAPED INTO* THAT LADY. HE SAYS THAT EVERYONE *KNEW* HER AND SHE WAS A NICE SCHOOLTEACHER, SO SHE MUST HAVE BEEN *POSSESSED* BECAUSE THERE'S NO OTHER EXPLANATION. I SAID THAT *SHE* WAS THE ONE WHO TALKED ABOUT A *DEMON*, BUT DADDY SAID THAT PROVED IT, AND I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO PROVE ANYTHING.

IS IT *TRUE*, MEDJINE?

DO YOU THINK IT'S TRUE?

NO?

I DON'T *KNOW!*

I'M *SCARED.*

ME TOO.

HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT AN *EXORCISM.*

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE, S-SOMETHING... UM, WOULD YOU CALL THAT ***AMORPHOUS*** OR MORE ***INCHOATE?***

Awrk.

OH ALL RIGHT, I'LL CH-CHOOSE AGAIN.

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE, SOME-THING...

BROTHER! BROTHER, YOU WON'T B-B-***BELIEVE*** WHO'S HEADED THIS WAY!

SHOULD WE INVITE THEM FOR TEA, CAIN? THEY ***LOOK*** LIKE THEY'VE BEEN W-WALKING FOR A LONG TIME.

GET ***INSIDE*** YOUR HOUSE, AND BAR THE DOOR!

I'M YOUR ELDER BROTHER, ABEL, AND I AM ***TELLING*** YOU, THAT ONE'S DANGEROUS.

I DON'T ***LIKE*** YOU BEING AROUND ***DANGEROUS PEOPLE.***

SO WHAT'S THIS *PLAN* OF YOURS?

many years ago, I discovered that Izanami *channels dreamers* into her underworld in *secret*, to punish souls without much effort on her part.

ingenious and highly *illicit*.

and since I left Izanami with some of *my* energy before I departed this world...

...I believe I might be able to call on that to find our way to her *back door* in this realm. We can slip through with the dreamers.

AND THEN SHE JUST LETS US WALK *OUT* OF YOMI-NO-KUNI?

Izanami and I parted on *good terms*.

I see no reason why she would *refuse* us passage through her land. Especially since I continue to *keep* her secret.

OH, DID YOU NOW? *VERY* GOOD TERMS?

SHUT UP FOR ONCE AND LET ME CONCENTRATE.

UH...

...REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO LOOK FOR TRACES OF YOUR ENERGY?

LUCIFERIAN ENERGY?

I THINK WE FOUND A DREAM OF YOU.

OH, THIS IS EMBARRASSING.

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA.

I COULD KILL THEM ALL FOR YOU.

C'MON, KID, THE IDEA *HAS* TO BE GETTING MORE APPEALING.

HI. SORRY TO WAKE YOU.

IS MY BROTHER THERE?

LEANDRE, I WANT TO COME LIVE WITH YOU. IF I COME, WILL YOU HIDE ME? I WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE. I JUST...I CAN'T STAY *HERE* ANYMORE.

IS SHE IN TROUBLE? WHAT'S GOING ON?

EVERYTHING'S OKAY. I JUST HAVE TO TALK TO HER FOR A MINUTE.

MEDJINE, YOU CAN COME AND LIVE IN MY ROOM FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT. MY MOMS WON'T HAVE TO KNOW.

YOU'LL LIKE IT. YOU CAN SLEEP WITH MY STUFFED ANIMALS.

I AM THE SON OF PERDITION, THE SERPENT OF OLD. I AM THE TEMPTER AND THE TRICKSTER, THE GAMBLER AND FORNICATOR.

QUAIL BEFORE ME, TINY ANGEL.

I DELIGHT IN AGONY. I CRAVE CORRUPTION--

YOU ARE A DREAM-THING. YOU ARE MORTAL FEAR AND MORTAL GUILT AND MORTAL DESIRE.

YOU ARE NOTHING.

EVERY CHILD SNEAKS OUT OF THEIR HOUSE AT SOME POINT. MAYBE THEY WANT TO GO TO A PARTY. MAYBE THEY'RE MEETING UP WITH FRIENDS.

MAYBE THEY JUST WANT TO WALK AROUND THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE QUIET DARK, PLEASED TO HAVE A SECRET HALF-HOUR OF ADULTHOOD.

WHERE DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOING?

OR MAYBE THEY'RE PLANNING ON RUNNING AWAY AND ***NEVER COMING BACK.***

PYE, SA'M TE MANJE M'PAT BA OU!

GET BACK HERE!

AS HE TRAVELS, LUCIFER'S SIDE PAINS HIM.

FOR A TIME, HE IS OBLIGED TO SET DOWN.

HE IS GLAD NO ONE SEES THIS. HE DOES NOT WANT ANYONE TO KNOW HOW FAR THROUGH HIS BODY THE SHARD HAS TRAVELED.

HOW ***WEAK*** HE HAS BECOME.

HOW MUCH IT HURTS.

LUCIFER IS USED TO BLUFFING.

HE CAN BLUFF A LITTLE LONGER.

GET UP!

WHAT ARE THOSE?

my wings.

WHEN LUCIFER LEFT HELL, HE LEFT HIS WINGS WITH IT, ONLY TO FIND THEY'D BEEN SOLD TO IZANAMI.

HE GOT HIS WINGS BACK, AND COST IZANAMI TWO OF HER SONS.

IZANAMI HAS TRIED TO KILL HIM AND SHE'S BEEN HIS LOVER.

NOW HE WONDERS WHAT ***ELSE*** SHE MAY HAVE DONE.

HELLO AGAIN, SUSANO-O-NO-MIKOTO.

INCENSE IS LIT THROUGHOUT MY MOTHER'S ROOMS. ALOESWOOD. IT IS SAID TO SHARPEN THE SENSES AND ***ENLIVEN*** THE BODY.

IT'S ALSO SUPPOSED TO PURIFY THE SPIRIT, BUT IN ***YOUR*** CASE THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY.

YOU WERE NOT INVITED HERE. I HAVE ***NO*** REASON TO TREAT YOU AS AN HONORED GUEST.

AND I HAVE NO REASON TO ***BEHAVE*** LIKE ONE.

IF YOU KILL ME, YOU WILL NEVER MAKE IT OUT OF THIS PLACE. YOU WILL ***DIE*** HERE, MORNINGSTAR.

TELL ME HOW YOU POSSESS AN IDENTICAL COPY OF THE ***WINGS*** ON MY BACK.

TELL ME TO WHOM THESE BELONG.

THEY BELONG TO ***US!*** WE ***GREW*** THEM. FROM ONE OF YOUR FEATHERS.

WHEN A FARMER BUYS A SQUASH, IS HE TO BE CRITICIZED FOR ***PLANTING*** ITS SEEDS?

MEDJINE! I AM THE ***HEAD*** OF THIS ***HOUSEHOLD!*** DON'T BE DEFIANT! COME OUT.

TOO BAD YOU DIDN'T GET A ***KNIFE*** FROM THE KITCHEN. TOO BUSY CLEANING OUT YOUR PIGGY BANK, I GUESS.

MEDJINE? IS THAT YOU, HONEY?

HELLO, MRS. HIGBEE.

DIDN'T I HEAR YOUR DADDY CALLING YOU?

I'VE GOT TO ***GO.***

HONEY, DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

DID HE *DO* SOMETHING TO YOU?

SORRY, MRS. HIGBEE! I REALLY *DO* HAVE TO *GO!*

WHAT DID SHE *SAY* TO YOU? THAT GIRL'S A *LIAR!*

WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?

WHEREVER THE NEXT BUS IS GOING.

THIS IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN. YOU FUNNEL DREAMERS THROUGH YOUR REALM. YOU WILL FIND ME ONE WHOSE NIGHTMARES ARE OF AZAZEL.

THEN I WILL LEAVE HERE WITH BOTH SETS OF WINGS.

AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO INVOLVE YOUR MOTHER.

IT WILL BE AS YOU SAY, LIGHTBRINGER.

THIS WAY.

DO YOU KNOW WHO KILLED GOD, LUCIFER?

WHY WOULD YOU ASK THAT?

I DREAMED THAT YOU DID. OR THAT YOU SAID YOU DID, ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU.

I THINK IT WAS AZAZEL.

IT WASN'T.

I DON'T THINK YOU *KNOW.*

SO YOU SAID.

YOU JUST WANT ME TO THINK YOU'RE *SMARTER* THAN I AM. THAT'S HOW YOU GET PEOPLE TO FOLLOW YOU, BUT IT'S *NOT* GOING TO WORK ON ME.

DULY NOTED.

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HINT?

THEY ALL FLOW THROUGH HERE ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THE DREAMING. WE WILL *FIND* YOUR NIGHTMARE.

AND THEN YOU WILL *GET OUT!*

MEDJINE FEELS A SENSE OF LIGHTNESS SHE HAS NOT KNOWN IN YEARS. SHE'S IN BIG TROUBLE, BUT SHE CAN'T BRING HERSELF TO CARE.

SHE SKETCHES THE ROUTE TO HER BROTHER, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S DREAMED OF THIS SO MANY TIMES, SHE KNOWS THE WAY BY ***HEART.***

YOU WANT A CUP OF COFFEE?

WE'RE PROBABLY THE ONLY PEOPLE UNDER ***FIFTY*** IN THIS PLACE. YOUNGSTERS GOT TO STICK TOGETHER.

WE'RE ***DEFINITELY*** THE ONLY PEOPLE UNDER EIGHTEEN.

I'M LORIN.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ***TELL*** ANYONE, ARE YOU?

THAT YOU'RE A RUNAWAY? NAH. WE'RE TWO OF A FEATHER.

BETTER FLOCK TOGETHER.

RIGHT NOW, I CAN SEE THE REAL APPEAL OF *OMNIPRESENCE.*

I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE MORE INTO *INEFFABILITY.*

ARE WE *DONE* NOW, MORNING-STAR?

JUST ONE MORE THING. BRING ME A NEEDLE AND THREAD.

ARE YOU *SURE* ABOUT THIS?

I am SURE that I am *TIRED* OF CARRYING YOU.

ELSEWHERE IN THE REALM OF WINDOWLESS ROOMS.

MOTHER, I DID WHAT YOU SAID. BUT I WISH I UNDERSTOOD WHY WE MUST *BEND* TO HIM.

ALL WILL BECOME CLEAR.

AND THEN WE WILL WASH *BLOOD* WITH *BLOOD.*

I HOPE THIS IS LIKE RIDING A BICYCLE.

SOMEWHERE IN NEW JERSEY.

UH, WHY ARE WE STOPPING?

EXIT

NOT *THIS* AGAIN.

MEDJINE, *WAKE UP!* WE'VE GOT TO R--

YOU ARE CARRYING SOMETHING *WITH* YOU. I THINK YOU'D BETTER GIVE IT TO *ME.*

WHAT IS HE *TALKING* ABOUT?

OH *SHIT.* YOU *DO NOT* WANT TO LISTEN TO THAT GUY.

HE'S THE *DEVIL.*

LIKE, THE REAL ONE. THE *ORIGINAL.*

SAMMAEL. *POISON OF GOD.* YOU'D BETTER LET ME OUT.

COME ON, I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU SAY. HONEST.

IT'S NOT VERY NICE, WHAT YOU'VE GOT THERE. IT *BITES.*

COME ON, BETTER THE DEVIL YOU *KNOW,* RIGHT? SELDOM IS THAT MORE LITERALLY TRUE.

THERE'S A HAITIAN PROVERB MEDJINE HEARD BUT NEVER UNDERSTOOD BEFORE:

"GREET THE DEVIL, HE'LL EAT YOU.

"*DON'T* GREET THE DEVIL, HE'LL EAT YOU."

JOHNSON

COLD HEAVEN Part Five: SON of MYSTERY

OUR LOST BROTHER WAS TO *DISPATCH* THE *ADVERSARY* WHILE HE WAS IN A *WEAKENED* STATE.

"It is Lucifer
The son of mystery
And since God suffers him to be,
He, too, is God's minister,
And labors for some good
By us not understood."
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

YET INSTEAD, GABRIEL IS *CHARMED* BY HIM.

LUCIFER HAS ALWAYS BEEN *VERY* CHARMING. IT MAY BE MY *LEAST FAVORITE* THING ABOUT HIM.

IF GABRIEL *DIED*, WE COULD HAVE SOUGHT *VENGEANCE*.

NOW, THE WAY FORWARD IS UNCLEAR.

I AM GLAD YOU TOOK ME INTO YOUR *CONFIDENCE*, METATRON. YOUR BURDEN IS TOO HEAVY TO BEAR ALONE.

I HAD A *PREMONITION*, RAPHAEL. YOU HAVE A PART TO PLAY AND MUST PLAY IT VERY SOON.

I THOUGHT SHE'D **NEVER** LET ME OUT.

AZAZEL, WE HAVE **QUESTIONS** FOR YOU.

OH SWEET FLESH. HOW I HAVE MISSED YOU.

STOP THAT! I COMMAND YOU!

DON'T RAIN ON MY PARADE OR I'LL EAT **YOU** NEXT.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO **DO** ANY-THING?

I DON'T MUCH CARE FOR DEVOURING TERRIFIED LITTLE GIRLS **MYSELF,** BUT THEN I TRY NOT TO JUDGE THE PROCLIVITIES OF OTHERS.

DOUBTLESS SOME DEVOURING WILL PUT HIM IN A BETTER MOOD.

I OPENED THE BOTTLE, SO YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT I SAY, AND I COMMAND YOU **NOT** TO HARM ME OR ANY OTHER LIVING THING **UNLESS** I GIVE YOU PERMISSION.

I MEAN, YOU **HAVE** TO OBEY, RIGHT? YOU PROMISED.

SHIT.

NEW PLAN. **YOU** KILL HER, MORNINGSTAR.

AFTER ALL, THIS IS **YOUR** FAULT.

IF YOU HADN'T GIVEN THAT **KEY** TO **DREAM** OF THE **ENDLESS**, I WOULDN'T BE **IN** THIS MESS.

YOU WOULDN'T EITHER.

STOP HIM IF HE TRIES TO KILL ME.

STOP **EVERYTHING** FROM TRYING TO KILL ME! I COMMAND YOU TO DO **THAT**, TOO.

GET **AWAY** FROM HER.

THIS FEATHER HAS BEEN **LEADING** ME, PULLING ME.

THAT FEATHER BELONGED TO THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL.

WHAT ARE **YOU** DOING WITH IT?

IT PULLED ME **HERE.**

AND NOW I THINK I FINALLY KNOW **WHY.**

SNAP

WELL, *THAT* WAS ANTI-CLIMACTIC.

I HEAR SOMETHING.

WHAT A PREDICTABLY OVERBLOWN ENTRANCE.

I MIGHT HAVE GUESSED. AZAZEL AND LUCIFER, TWO-THIRDS OF THE OLD ***TRIUMVIRATE,*** WORKING TOGETHER. CONSPIRING AGAINST YOU, GABRIEL.

METATRON SAID I HAD A PART TO PLAY.

NOW I SEE IT IS TO KILL ***YOU,*** MORNING-STAR.

OH, WELL, IF ***METATRON*** SAYS SO, THEN IT MUST BE TRUE.

HE'S PRACTICALLY THE WORD OF THE ALMIGHTY ***HIMSELF*** THESE DAYS.

RAAAAGHH!

YOU ARE *WEAK* NOW, BROTHER. WOUNDED.

DEPART THIS WORLD CURSING MY NAME.

YOU THINK A *LOT* OF YOURSELF, DON'T YOU?

THIS IS *REALLY* GETTING IN THE *WAY* OF MY INVESTIGATION.

I NEED TO QUESTION AZAZEL.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE.

YOU, BONES AND BLOOD LONG FORGOTTEN. YOU, **SHARD** OF UNFULFILLED VENGEANCE. HERE HE IS BEFORE YOU. **AZAZEL**, WHOM YOU WERE MADE TO DESTROY.

I GET IT. YOU BOYS UPSTAIRS WANT ME TO PIN IT ON HIM AND CALL IT A DAY. BUT HOW DO YOU THINK THAT MAKES ***YOU*** LOOK?

YOU CAN **STILL** FULFILL YOUR DESTINY.

AAGGHH

KHOOMPF

YOU **BASTARD!** ALL THIS TRACKING OF AZAZEL--EVERYTHING! YOU ONLY CARED ABOUT GETTING THAT **SWORD SHARD** OUT OF YOUR SIDE.

PLAYED YOU, DID HE?

THAT'S WHAT HE DOES.

OH GABRIEL, WHY DOES IT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE **ONE** THING OR **ANOTHER** WITH YOU?

I WAS **MULTI-TASKING.**

HE **DECEIVED** YOU ALL ALONG, GABRIEL. HE **MURDERED** OUR FATHER.

WHY ELSE **DESTROY** AZAZEL BEFORE HE COULD GIVE YOU ANY ANSWERS?

DO YOU **DEFEND** YOURSELF? NO CLEVER **OBFUSCATION** THIS TIME?

SPEAK, ADVERSARY!

OH, GET THAT THING OUT OF MY FACE.

THE ONLY **USEFUL** THING WE COULD HAVE ASKED AZAZEL WAS WHERE HE'D BEEN BURIED.

THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN **VERY** USEFUL.

WELL, THEN, LET'S ASK THE ANGEL WHO **BURIED** HIM.

RAPHAEL...?

ME? ALL THOSE YEARS AGO?

I BURIED HIM IN THE **DESERT.** IN DUDAEL.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO BE A LITTLE MORE **SPECIFIC.**

MEDJINE CANNOT HELP BEING AWED AS THE ANGEL FLIES HER THROUGH THE NIGHT SKY TOWARD THE PLACE SHE TOLD HIM WAS HOME. SHE CAN'T HELP BEING ***TERRIFIED*** EITHER.

A BURNT CAT FEARS THE FIRE.

LORIN STAYED WITH THE OTHER ANGEL, THE ONE WITH THE PEACOCK-FEATHERED WINGS. APPARENTLY, IT HAD SOME JOB FOR HIM TO DO.

CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

GO AHEAD.

ARE YOU THE ***GOOD*** KIND OF ANGEL? THE ONE THAT'S UP IN HEAVEN?

I WAS. BUT I'M NOT ANYMORE. I GOT KICKED OUT.

BUT YOU MET THE GOOD KIND OF ANGEL TONIGHT. THE ***BAD*** KIND, TOO. ALTHOUGH MAYBE IT WASN'T TOTALLY ***CLEAR*** WHICH WAS WHICH.

THE DEVIL IS YOUR ***BROTHER,*** ISN'T HE?

HE IS.

IT'S OKAY IF YOU LOVE HIM.

I'D LOVE ***MY*** BROTHER, TOO, EVEN IF HE WAS THE DEVIL HIMSELF.

THERE'S A PART OF MEDJINE THAT WANTS TO TRUST ADULTS.

IT'S THE SAME PART OF HER THAT WANTS TO TRUST ANGELS.

MEDJINE KNOWS THAT IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF ***TIME*** BEFORE SHE GETS CAUGHT. SHE KNOWS THAT WHEN THAT HAPPENS, THINGS ARE GOING TO GET COMPLICATED.

THIRTEEN IS A LONG WAY FROM ***EIGHTEEN,*** A LONG WAY FROM BEING ON HER OWN.

SHE TRIES TO FOCUS ON ***NOW,*** ON HER BROTHER FINALLY BESIDE HER.

YOU'RE ***SAFE*** NOW. YOU CAN STAY FOREVER.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW LONG SHE HAS WITH HIM, BUT SHE TELLS HERSELF THAT NO ONE ***HAS*** TO STAY ANYWHERE FOREVER AND, MAYBE, NO ONE ***GETS*** TO STAY ANY-WHERE FOREVER EITHER.

LEANDRE, HONEY? ARE YOU ***OKAY?*** I THOUGHT I HEARD SOME-THING.

I'M FINE, MOM. I JUST GOT UP FOR A DRINK OF WATER.

THE DESERT. DUDAEL.

INTERESTING THAT THE ARCH-ANGELS ARE POKING THEIR NOSES IN NOW THAT YOU'RE CLOSE TO HAVING A SUSPECT.

I DIDN'T ***KNOW*** I WAS CLOSE.

YOU KEEP ACTING LIKE YOU KNOW ***EVERYTHING.*** BUT YOU WON'T TELL ME. AM I SUPPOSED TO ***GUESS?***

YOU SHOULD TRY.

REALLY. YOU SHOULD TRY TO GUESS.

RAPHAEL KNEW WHERE THE ***SWORD*** WAS, SO MAYBE IT WAS ONE OF THE ***ANGELS*** ABOVE.

AND OF COURSE, ***THEY*** SAY IT WAS YOU.

AUGH!

I SEE YOU FOUND THE BURIAL SITE.

METATRON! THESE FEATHERS BELONG TO ***METATRON.***

HE WAS HERE.

HE MUST HAVE DONE IT.

DON'T BE AN IDIOT!

YOU!

YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOOK AZAZEL'S SWORD FROM ITS RESTING PLACE.

YOU USED IT TO CUT THE PRESENCE DOWN!

YOU THINK I KILLED OUR FATHER?

I DO! DENY IT!

DO YOU KNOW WHY *YOU* WERE CHOSEN? YOU ASKED ME BEFORE.

THEN, I HAD TO BE *DIPLOMATIC.* BUT NOW I WILL TELL YOU *PLAINLY.*

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO *KILL* LUCIFER. *TWICE* YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO KILL HIM, BUT YOU *FAILED.* AND INSTEAD, YOU *CAUSED* THIS.

WHAT'S HAPPENED IS *ALL YOUR FAULT.*

I CHOSE YOU BECAUSE *YOU DON'T MATTER.*

YOU WERE NEVER *SUPPOSED* TO MATTER, GABRIEL.

I HOPED THAT, THIS TIME, IF YOU COULDN'T KILL THE *MORNING-STAR,* THEN AT LEAST HE'D KILL *YOU.*

NOW~~

~~FALL FROM HEAVEN *AGAIN.*

I GUESS MAYBE IT WAS STUPID TO EXPECT HIM TO CONFESS.

ESPECIALLY BECAUSE HE DIDN'T DO IT.

YOU DID. YOU KILLED GOD.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING.

DON'T YOU THINK I'D REMEMBER SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

I THINK SOMEONE MADE VERY SURE YOU WOULDN'T.

"WHEN I MET MYSELF OUT IN THE DARKNESS, FOR A MOMENT, IT FELT *INEVITABLE.*

"AS THOUGH *TIME* WAS BENDING BACK ON ITSELF.

"THEN I SAW A SWORD IN YOUR HAND AND I KNEW YOU WERE THERE TO *KILL* ME.

"I HAD NO WEAPON, SO I REACHED OUT TO BIND TOGETHER STARDUST AND DEBRIS INTO A SWORD OF MY OWN. YOU WILL RECALL THAT WHILE MICHAEL HAD THE DEMIURGIC POWER OF CREATION, *MY* GIFT WAS SHAPING THE *WORLD* TO MY WILL.

"BUT I HAD GIVEN THAT *POWER* TO *MAZIKEEN.*

"NOTHING CAME TO MY HAND.

"IT WAS THAT MOMENT OF FORGETFULNESS THAT LET YOU *HIT* ME. THERE WAS A SHOCK OF PAIN AND THEN THE BLADE *BROKE* AGAINST MY RIBS.

"YOU SWUNG AGAIN, AND WHEN I BLOCKED IT, THE BROKEN END SCRATCHED THE EDGE OF YOUR *THROAT.* JUST A SLIGHT CUT.

"WITH THE LAST OF MY STRENGTH I FLEW FOR HOME."

I FIRST SUSPECTED YOU WHEN YOU CAME INTO EX LUX AND THE SHARD *LURCHED* INSIDE OF ME.

THEN I SAW THE SCAR ON YOUR NECK.

BUT STILL, I DOUBTED MY CONCLUSIONS. IT SEEMED INCREDIBLE THAT YOU, *DISASTER* THAT YOU ARE, COULD HAVE WOUNDED *ME*.

"THE EVIDENCE GREW. IN HELL, YOU HEALED TOO FAST TO BE HUMAN, YET THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE.

AND, OF COURSE, THERE'S THE FACT YOU'RE NOT DEAD *NOW*, DESPITE BEING THROWN FROM HEAVEN.

IT WAS YOU. YOU HAD *MOTIVE* AND *OPPORTUNITY*.

"THEN YOUR DREAM--THE RAVENS SUGGESTED YOU DIDN'T REMEMBER SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT LITERALLY *ATE* AT YOU."

METATRON TOLD ME THAT I'D BEEN SENT TO KILL YOU TWICE, BUT I ONLY REMEMBERED ONCE...

BUT I *COULDN'T* HAVE DONE THIS.

I WOULDN'T.

I DON'T *THINK* I WOULD.

"IMAGINE IT. YOU TRIED TO *SLAY* ME. BUT YOU FAILED.

"IN THAT PLACE BEYOND PLACES, WHERE EVEN THE ALMIGHTY'S OMNISCIENCE COULD NOT REACH YOU, YOU PONDERED YOUR OPTIONS."

FOR SO LONG YOU'D BLAMED ME FOR TAKING YOUR HEART, BUT I WASN'T THE ***ONLY*** ARCHITECT OF YOUR SUFFERING, WAS I? OUR FATHER TURNED HIS BACK ON YOU.

AND YOU WERE SO ***ANGRY.***

YOU'VE BEEN ANGRY FOR SO ***LONG.***

I BET HE NEVER SAW IT COMING.

BUT ***SOMEONE*** DID.

SOMEONE TOOK YOUR MEMORIES AND GAVE YOU BACK YOUR STRENGTH.

YOU ***KNEW.*** YOU KNEW ***ALL THIS TIME*** AND YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

WHY SHOULD I? GOD WAS MY ***ENEMY.*** IF ANY OF US WAS SUPPOSED TO KILL HIM, IT WAS ***SUPPOSED TO BE ME.***

OH YES, YOU GOT TO BE THE ***BAD*** SON, SO THE REST OF US WERE STUCK WITH BEING GOOD ***FOREVER.***

BUT I GUESS IT TURNS OUT THAT ***I'M*** MUCH WORSE THAN YOU EVER WERE.

THAT MUST PISS YOU OFF.

AT LEAST I'VE GOT THAT.

NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM. IF THE DEVIL DIDN'T EXIST, WE'D HAVE TO REINVENT HIM.

I AM ***NEVER*** GOING TO FORGIVE YOU, YOU KNOW.

DON'T WORRY. I am NEVER GOING TO FORGIVE ***YOU*** EITHER.

EX LUX, LOS ANGELES.

EX LUX

I'M SORRY IF THIS HURTS, SIR.

IT *SHOULD* HURT.

SO THE DEVIL, HE HOISTED HER UP ON HIS HUMP, AND DOWN TO HELL WITH HER HE DID JUMP, WITH A RITEFUL LA TITTY FIE DAY...

I SAW YOU WATCHING ME. WANT TO TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE?

AFTER YOU TAKE OFF YOUR MAKEUP EVERY NIGHT, YOU THINK ABOUT CALLING THE ONLY BOY YOU EVER LOVED, EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEEN *DEAD* FOR TEN YEARS.

YOU'RE ESTRANGED FROM YOUR PARENTS, NOT BECAUSE THEY DISAPPROVE OF YOU...

...BUT BECAUSE THEY REMIND YOU THAT NO ONE IS ENTIRELY *SELF-CREATED.*

YOU HAVE A MASS IN YOUR LOWER INTESTINE AND IT'S GROWING. SOON YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GO *HOME.* BUT WHO ARE YOU GOING TO BE WHEN YOU GET THERE?

SMOOTH.

SOMEONE'S IN A BAD MOOD.

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD CHECK ON GABRIEL.

WELL, THAT'S UNEXPECTED.

LUCIF--

OH, NO. MY MISTAKE.

YOU MUST BE LOST, LITTLE ANGEL. REALLY, ***REALLY*** LOST.

TAKE ME TO YOUR MISTRESS.

MY LADY MAZIKEEN, YOU WON'T RECONSIDER LETTING US DROP THE ANGEL INTO AN OUBLIETTE?

I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU HERE SO SOON, GABRIEL.

LADY OF HELL, I WAS WRONG TO SPURN YOUR OFFER.

I DID NOT KNOW *MYSELF* AS WELL AS I THOUGHT. I BARELY KNEW MYSELF AT ALL.

IF YOU WILL HAVE ME, I DEDICATE MYSELF TO YOUR SERVICE.

THIS IS A GLADDENING CHANGE OF HEART.

MY HEART WAS TAKEN BY *HELL* LONG AGO. I'M JUST FINALLY FOLLOWING IT.

ALL I ASK IN RETURN IS THAT YOU HELP ME DISCOVER WHO HAS BEEN MANIPULATING ME. WHO *STOLE* MY MEMORIES.

HERE. THE BARGAIN IS *MADE.*

IF I CAN'T BE BLESSED, THEN LET ME BE A *CURSE.*

A CURSE ON *HEAVEN.*

THE END

SON of the MORNING

NEW ENGLAND.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR YOU TO CHICKEN OUT.

YOU SAID YOUR PARENTS WEREN'T SO BAD.

THEY'RE NOT.

FOR *SATANISTS.*

ALL FAMILIES ARE STRANGE.

MINE'S JUST *STRANGER.*

I WOULDN'T BET ON THAT.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS FROM AN *ANTHROPOLOGICAL* POINT OF VIEW AS WELL AS A PERSONAL ONE.

IT'S JUST-- WHAT IF THEY DON'T APPROVE OF ME? WHAT IF THEY DON'T THINK I'M *EVIL* ENOUGH FOR THEIR ONLY DAUGHTER?

OH, SHUT UP.

HOW COME WE'RE STOPPING?

MY PARENTS DON'T EXPECT US FOR AT *LEAST* ANOTHER HALF HOUR.

WE'VE GOT SOME TIME. LET'S *WASTE* IT.

WHAT'S WRONG?

SOMETHING WAS OUT HERE.

WHAT WAS IT? A DEER? A BEAR?

BROWN BEARS SOMETIMES COME INTO MY PARENTS' YARD IN THE WINTER, LOOKING FOR GARBAGE.

YEAH, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN IT.

WE BETTER GET GOING.

SO, TELL ME ABOUT THIS TOWN. LOTS OF ***GHOST*** STORIES?

PLENTY.

MY PARENTS GREW UP HERE, SO I'VE HEARD THEM ALL.

THE BOY WHO ***KILLED HIMSELF*** OVER BY THE SCHOOL.

THE BABY WHO GOT ***DROWNED*** IN THE LAKE BY A BABYSITTER.

AND OF COURSE, THE GIRL WHO ***BURNED TO DEATH*** IN THE FIRST SATANIST CHURCH.

DEVIL'S KNOB, 1986.

"IN THE EIGHTIES, MY PARENTS WERE REALLY INTO ***DEATH METAL*** AND ***PARTYING.***

"THERE WAS THIS GUY IN THE SCENE, ***GORDO,*** WHO DECIDED THAT IF HE RAN A CHURCH, HE'D NEVER HAVE TO PAY ***TAXES.***

"HE'D INHERITED HIS PARENTS' HOUSE AND DECIDED TO TURN IT INTO SOMETHING THAT WAS PART ***SATANIC CHURCH*** AND PART A PLACE FOR ***BANDS*** TO PLAY.

"MOM SAYS IT GOT ***PRETTY GROSS*** THERE.

COME ON, JOANNA! DON'T BE SUCH A SPOIL-SPORT.

"BUT THE STORY GOES THAT ***DAD*** MET ***MOM*** AT ONE OF THE CHURCH'S PARTIES.

"SHE WAS ***PUKING*** ON THE LAWN.

NOT ON MY SHOES, ALICE!

"DAD SAID SHE WAS THE ***PRETTIEST THING*** HE EVER SAW."

THAT'S BEAUTIFUL.

I KNOW, RIGHT? MY FATHER'S A REAL *ROMANTIC.*

"ONE NIGHT A *PARTY* WENT A LITTLE TOO CRAZY.

"AND GORDO'S 'CHURCH' *BURNED DOWN* WITH A DRUNK GIRL IN IT. *JOANNA NEWTON.*

"GORDO USED THE *INSURANCE MONEY* AND SOME DONATIONS TO BUILD A CHURCH THAT ACTUALLY LOOKED *CHURCH-LIKE.*

"EVERYONE SAYS HE SOLD THE GIRL'S *SOUL* FOR THE MONEY. THEY EXPECTED AN ARMY OF *DEMONS* TO SHOW UP AND EAT THE WHOLE TOWN.

"INSTEAD, EVERYBODY GOT *OLD* AND STOPPED DOING SO MANY DRUGS AND HAD KIDS AND GOT *BORING.*

"NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER."

AND REMEMBER, EVERYONE, IF YOU WANT TO SIGN UP FOR THE *POTLUCK,* THE SHEET IS ON THE TABLE IN THE BACK.

ALSO, IF YOU'RE WILLING TO BRING A *VEGETARIAN* OR *GLUTEN-FREE* OPTION, THAT WOULD BE *WICKED.*

WAS THIS WHAT YOU WERE PICTURING?

KIND OF, ACTUALLY.

ROSEMARY! YOU'RE HOME!

AND YOU MUST BE *TAKEHIKO.* WE'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU.

COME IN, COME IN. I'M *ALAN* AND THIS IS MY WIFE, *ALICE.*

OH, DON'T MIND HIM. THAT'S *DAMNED SPOT* AND HE'S HOPING YOU'LL GIVE HIM A *TREAT.*

LIKE FROM *MACBETH?*

WHAT?

NEVER MIND.

TRESPASSERS WILL BE SACRIFICED

COME ON UP. BRING YOUR **STUFF.** I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE WE'LL BE SLEEPING.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU **THINK** OF **HIM?**

NICE ENOUGH, I GUESS.

NO MATCH FOR **ROSIE,** THOUGH. THAT GIRL'S GOING TO **EAT** HIM FOR **BREAKFAST.**

YOUR PARENTS ARE GOING TO LET ME **SLEEP** IN YOUR **ROOM?**

SATANISTS, REMEMBER? PHYSICAL GRATIFICATION IS GOOD.

OH NO! I **SHOCKED** YOU, DIDN'T I? I'M SORRY.

MAYBE I'M NOT AS READY FOR THIS AS I THOUGHT.

I WAS KIND OF *INFAMOUS* IN THIS TOWN.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW GREAT IT FEELS TO BE *NOBODY* AT COLLEGE.

YOU MUST HAVE SCARED THE *HELL* OUT OF BOYS IN YOUR HIGH SCHOOL.

SO LONG AS I DON'T SCARE *YOU.*

HEY, KIDS.

THERE'S A *THING* TONIGHT AT THE CHURCH. LOW-KEY. NO *BLACK MASS* OR ANYTHING.

THE HIGH PRIEST WANTS TO MEET TAKEHIKO, HERE.

UH... OKAY.

FINE, BUT WE'RE GOING IN MY CAR.

TAKEHIKO WAS TEN WHEN HIS MOTHER SENT HIM TO LIVE WITH HIS UNCLE. HIS FATHER WAS LONG GONE AND THERE WAS THE ***FAMILY BUSINESS*** TO WORRY ABOUT.

HE KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A ***NOT-SO-NORMAL*** CHILDHOOD.

SKKRK?

TAKEHIKO?

EVERYTHING OKAY?

OH, YEAH. FINE.

HE'S BEEN ***AVOIDING*** TAKING OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS. HE WONDERS IF IT'S TIME TO ***STEP UP.***

HE WONDERS IF ROSEMARY WILL BE ***IMPRESSED*** BY IT.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS STUFF?

YOU MEAN, DO I THINK THERE'S SOME ***BRIGHT RED GUY*** WITH A FORKED TONGUE WHO'S GOING TO GRANT ALL MY ***WORST WISHES?***

SO, NO?

"MOST SATANISTS DON'T BELIEVE IN, LIKE, A ***LITERAL SATAN*** FROM A LITERAL ***HELL*** OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE. I MEAN, ***SOME*** DO, WITH HORNS AND HOOVES AND EVERYTHING.

"BUT FOR MORE OF US, IT'S ABOUT SEEING THE ***BENEFITS*** OF PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST.

"BEING OKAY WITH EATING TOO MUCH AND LUSTING AFTER HOT PEOPLE AND HAVING LAZY DAYS AND GETTING ANGRY. BEING DIFFICULT. BEING A BITCH. AND CONSIDERING IT A ***SACRAMENT.***"

SINNING IS WINNI

THE DEVIL GETS HIS DUE, YOU KNOW? AND THAT'S ***NO*** SMALL THING, GETTING YOUR DUE.

NO, IT'S NOT AT ALL A SMALL THING.

TO ***ADMIT*** WHAT YOU WANT.

TO ***GET*** IT.

EXACTLY! SPOKEN LIKE A SATANIST.

HEY, WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

COME ON! KNOCK IT OFF. THIS ISN'T ***FUNNY.***

THIS IS SERIOUSLY ***EMBARRASSING.***

WHAT'S GOING ON?

AUGH!

IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY BOYS FALL FOR THIS.

GOT TO GET OUR SACRIFICES FROM OUT OF TOWN, AFTER ALL.

NO TRACES.

FOR FATHER LUCIFER!

STOP IT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

SEE? IT'S A TRICK BLADE.

GOOD JOKE, RIGHT?

YOU DARE?

OH COME ON, KID. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN YOUR EXPRESSION.

IT WAS FUNNY!

IT WAS STUPID. PUT YOUR CLOTHES BACK ON.

YOU SUPPOSE THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU DRESS IN BLACK AND BLASPHEME, YOU'RE THE MONSTER THAT LURKS IN THE SHADOWS?

BUT I HAVE SEEN THE FACE OF YOUR SINS.

DEAD WOMAN, I CALL YOU! JOANNA NEWTON, I CALL YOU!

:UGGHHH:

THE JOKE'S ON *YOU.*

I THOUGHT JOANNA *BURNED UP* IN THE FIRE. *ALAN? GORDO?* WHAT'S GOING ON?

YEAH, AND WHAT'S GOING ON WITH *ROSE'S BOY-FRIEND?*

I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

EVERYONE *GET BACK!* SHE MIGHT BE *DANGER-OUS.*

SPEAK, I *COMMAND* YOU.

YOU LEFT ME FOR DEAD, ALAN.

WE WERE *SO HIGH.* WE WERE OUT OF OUR MINDS.

WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING, *STOP IT!*

NOT YET.

WHAT DID YOU *DO* TO HER?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT *WASN'T ME.*

GORDO GAVE HER THE *DRUGS.* GORDO WAS THE ONE WHO SUMMONED THE *DEMON.*

HOW CAN YOU BE STANDING HERE?

UNBURNT.

UNDEAD.

I WILL TELL YOU.

I WAS WITH A GUY BACK THEN BECAUSE HE HAD *CASH.* EVERY TIME I GAVE HIM A *BLOW JOB,* HE'D BUY ME ONE OF THOSE PEWTER *DRAGON* FIGURINES.

"BUT WE'D HAD A *FIGHT* AND I WAS BLOWING OFF STEAM.

"GORDO HAD SCORED A BUNCH OF *DRUGS.* HE AND ALAN WERE ALREADY *HIGH AS KITES* WHEN I GOT THERE.

"BUT I GUESS I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW *PURE* THE STUFF WAS.

"NONE OF US DID."

COME ON, YOU CAN'T BE DEAD.

PLEASE.

WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE. YOU SET YOUR HOUSE ON FIRE.

WHAT THE FUCK, MAN?

IT FAILED. MY SPELL FAILED. I CAN'T BRING HER BACK.

I FLED. WHEN GORDO SPOTTED ME AFTER, HE RAN FROM ME.

HE WAS AFRAID OF WHAT HE'D DONE AND THE BARGAIN HE MADE.

TELL US ABOUT THIS BARGAIN.

ASMODEUS. I SAID HE COULD HAVE ANYTHING HE WANTED.

I LOVED HER.

AND I WAS REALLY, REALLY HIGH.

LET'S SEE WHAT ASMODEUS HAS TO SAY.

UNCLE, I SUMMON YOU!

WELL, DEVIL WORSHIPPERS, YOU'VE FINALLY FOUND YOURSELF A DEVIL.

NOT ME, *HIM.*

HE IS, AFTER ALL, THE FIRSTBORN SON OF *LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR* AND *IZANAMI-NO-MIKOTO.* HE IS A PRINCE OF THE DEAD TWICE OVER.

SOON TO BE *KING OF HELL.*

SO THIS IS YOUR GIRLFRIEND? VERY WELL, YOU MAY BRING HER.

WHAT? WHERE?

THE TIME FOR DAWDLING IS OVER. LUCIFER IS BACK. WE MUST MAKE OUR MOVE *NOW.*

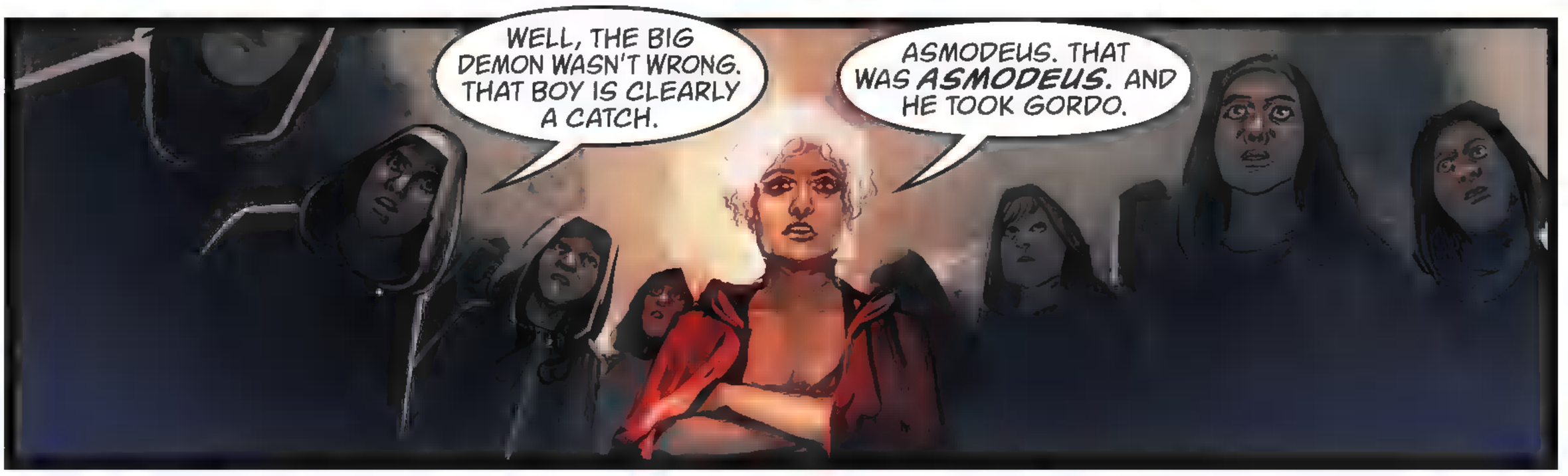
NOW?

BUT I ONLY SUMMONED YOU TO *STRUT AROUND* AND BE *IMPRESSIVE.*

TIME FOR YOU TO MEET *HIS* FAMILY.

WHAT? *NO!!*

AND I WILL BRING THIS ONE TO BE YOUR *SERVANT* AND FULFILL HIS BARGAIN.


WELL, THE BIG DEMON WASN'T WRONG. THAT BOY IS CLEARLY A CATCH.
ASMODEUS. THAT WAS ASMODEUS. AND HE TOOK GORDO.

IMAGINE, OUR LITTLE ROSEMARY, BRIDE OF THE DEVIL.
LET'S NOT MOVE TOO FAST. THEY'RE JUST DATING.

AND THAT'S NOT GOING TO DISTRACT ME FROM THE FACT YOU SLEPT WITH THAT SKANK!
THAT WAS MORE THAN TWO DECADES AGO!

AS FOR YOU, BITCH, I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE DEAD OR NOT--I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!

AND I AM GOING TO **BITE YOUR THROAT** OUT.

ENOUGH!

JOANNA, THIS IS A **MIRACLE!** A GENUINE **SATANIC MIRACLE.**

JOANNA, **RISEN FROM THE DEAD.** OUR LOST LAMB, RETURNED TO US.

PRAISE LUCIFER!

AND **PRAISE** HIS **SON!**

WE MUST ISSUE MAZIKEEN A CHALLENGE. A ***CONTEST,*** FOR HER CROWN.

THIS IS EXACTLY THE WAY I PICTURED IT.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO CLAIM YOUR INHERITANCE.

I KNOW YOU'RE ***PISSED.***

WHAT IS ***WRONG*** WITH YOU? OF COURSE I'M ***PISSED.***

YOU SHOULD HAVE ***TOLD*** ME!

YOU'RE RIGHT. ***I'M SORRY.***

BUT I'M ***GLAD*** YOU'RE HERE. I DON'T THINK I COULD FACE ***MY FATHER*** ALONE.

I'M NOT GENERALLY BIG ON ***FORGIVENESS.***

BUT I GUESS, FOR YOU, I COULD ***TRY.***

The End

"Literate, smart, gloriously nasty. I can't wait to see what happens next." —**Neil Gaiman**

"Black's dialogue flat out dazzles." —***Paste Magazine***

"This is Vertigo at its very best–a beautifully handled, classic character with a fresh twist."
—**Jock,** artist on BATMAN, *Wytches*

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

Once he was the Morningstar, first and most beautiful of the heavenly host. Then he ruled over Hell, until he gave up his kingdom to pursue his absent Father. Finally, after tracking down and confronting the Alpha and Omega, he left our universe behind—apparently forever.

But now Lucifer is back—wounded and weakened, but suave and savvy as ever. And he's about to be handed the biggest mystery in the history of Creation: God has been found dead, and the Lightbringer is the prime suspect in His murder.

To clear his name and reclaim his throne, Lucifer must solve this Deicide himself. But even with help from the disgraced archangel Gabriel, the task is daunting. To maintain the status quo in both Heaven and Hell, angels and demons alike are determined to pin the crime upon the First of the Fallen—but it will be a cold day in either realm before the Devil fails to get his due.

HOLLY BLACK, acclaimed author of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, and artist **LEE GARBETT** resurrect an iconic antihero in LUCIFER VOL. I: COLD HEAVEN, collecting issues #1-6 of the new VERTIGO series continuing the saga begun by legendary creators **Neil Gaiman, Mike Carey** and **Peter Gross.**

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"